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WITH SULLY INTO THE SIOUX LAND

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Catching up a heavy stick he hurled it at the head of one of the warriors
[CHAPTER III]

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"AMONG THE SIOUX" SERIES

WITH SULLY INTO THE SIOUX LAND

BY

JOSEPH MILLS HANSON

AUTHOR OF "THE CONQUEST OF THE MISSOURI,"
"FRONTIER BALLADS," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY
JOHN W. NORTON

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TO MY FATHER

JOSEPH RANDALL HANSON,

WHO, AS A BOY AND YOUNG MAN ON THE OLD DAKOTA FRONTIER, LIVED THROUGH MORE ADVENTURES THAN A VOLUME COULD DESCRIBE

Gregory 26 Dec. 1942

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WITH SULLY INTO THE SIOUX LAND

CHAPTER I

THE SCOURGE OF THE BORDER

"PAPA is coming, mama! Papa is coming!" Tommy Briscoe, brimming over with excitement, ran, shouting, across the yard and darted into the kitchen, leaving a half emptied pail of milk standing on the ground before the stable, where a small red calf he had been feeding promptly upset it. In a moment he reappeared in the doorway, his mother and little sister Annie behind him. Mrs. Briscoe, a woman still evidently under middle age but whose sweet, serious face showed plainly the lines which the patient endurance of hardships draw upon the faces of most frontier women, looked down the faintly marked road running away to the south-

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ward, surprise and perplexity in her eyes. Along the road and still some distance away, a horseman was galloping toward them furiously. The road led only to the Briscoe cabin, which was distant a number of miles from its nearest neighbors. The rider could hardly be any other than Mr. Briscoe; moreover, even at that distance his wife could recognize the color and the short, jerking gallop of the horse he was riding.

"It is certainly Chick," she said, half to herself and half to the children. "But what can bring Tom home so soon? He did not expect to be back before four or five o'clock and now it is hardly past noon. He must have left Fort Ridgely almost as soon as he reached there. I hope nothing is wrong."

"I hope he got the calico for my dolly's dress," exclaimed Annie, dancing up and down in anticipation of the gift her father had promised to bring her when he rode away in the morning.

"And I hope he got my coyote trap," added Tommy. "The coyotes will carry off all our chickens, first thing we know."

He raised the short bow he was carrying and sent

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a little iron-tipped arrow whizzing accurately into a tree-trunk fifty feet away. He had been going out to the meadow in a few minutes, and he never went anywhere without his bow and arrows, for he was sufficiently expert with them to bring down now and then a squirrel or a quail and sometimes even a prairie chicken.

The two children, unconscious of any cause for uneasiness in their father's early return, followed Mrs. Briscoe as she stepped from the door and walked a few paces down the road to meet the approaching rider, who came on without slacking pace until he drew up beside them. His horse, a small animal, was dripping with sweat and trembling with exertion, for it was a hot August day and his rider was a large man. Mr. Briscoe, for he it was, stepped down from the saddle rather stiffly. His face was very grave as he kissed his wife and children.

"Did you get my coyote trap, papa?" cried the little boy, almost before his father's foot had touched the ground.

"Did you bring my calico, papa?" chimed in Annie.

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"No, my dears, I had n't time. You had better run away a minute." He glanced at his wife significantly.

"Oh, I 'm sorry!" exclaimed Tommy. "But let me unsaddle Chick." He caught the stirrup leather and swung himself nimbly into the saddle.

"Go and finish feeding the calf, Annie," said Mrs. Briscoe.

The little girl, with disappointed face, walked obediently toward the stable, into which Tommy had already ridden.

"What has happened, Thomas?" exclaimed Mrs. Briscoe, her voice quivering with anxiety, as soon as the children were beyond hearing.

Her husband laid his strong hand reassuringly on her arm.

"Don't be frightened, Mary," he said, "we shall doubtless get out of it all right, but we must hurry. The Indians broke out at the Lower Agency this morning; you know they have been becoming more and more restless for a good while past. When I reached Fort Ridgely, about eleven, Captain Marsh had already started for the Agency with about fifty

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men. He may have the disturbance crushed by this time. I saw Lieutenant Geer, who is left in command with forty men. Lieutenant Sheehan marched for Fort Ripley yesterday with fifty men. Geer would have sent an escort with me while I came for you but of course he could not spare a man from the handful he has. I think it would not be really dangerous to stay here, but to be on the safe side and not expose you and the children to any risk we had perhaps better pack what we can on the wagon and go to the fort for a few days till the trouble blows over. Where is Al?"

Mr. Briscoe was slapping the dust from his coat and hat as he talked. He tried to speak in as reassuring terms and as confident a tone as possible, but his wife intuitively knew that he was not telling her all that was in his mind.

"Al just went up to the meadow to turn the windrows," she said. "Tommy was going to help him as soon as he finished feeding the calf. Shall he go for Al?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Briscoe called to the boy, who dashed away

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toward the meadow, which lay only a short distance north, beyond a thicket of bushes and small trees. Then she turned to her husband, who was walking into the stable.

"You have had no dinner, Tom," she said.

"No, but I want none."

"Were any white people killed at the Agency?" she asked, as Mr. Briscoe came out with a halter and started toward the pasture lot where their other horse was grazing. He seemed to want to avoid questions, but he answered:

"They say there were."

"Many?"

Her husband paused. He was not accustomed to conceal things from his wife.

"Why," he replied, hesitatingly, "it is reported that all of them were killed; but that is probably exaggerated, and very likely it will prove there were none."

Mrs. Briscoe's face paled a little but she retained her composure. She asked no more questions, for now she knew all that was necessary for the present of the gravity of the situation. Moreover, she had

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supreme confidence in her husband's judgment. He started again toward the pasture, saying, as he glanced toward the lumber wagon standing near the kitchen door:

"You had better begin putting things in the wagon, Mary. You know what to take; only the most necessary and valuable things, for we shall doubtless be back in a few days."

Indeed, Mrs. Briscoe knew well by hard experience what to take. Once before during the brief year they had spent in the wild valley of the Minnesota River, they had fled to Fort Ridgely, about twenty miles south of their claim, at the alarm of an Indian uprising, which, however, in that instance had fortunately proved false. That was in the Spring of 1862; it was now August of the same year. When they moved into the country during the previous August, bringing the few possessions which remained to them from the wreck of their fortunes in Missouri, their nearest neighbor lived fourteen miles away. Now there were three pioneer families within a radius of ten miles of them, and, in comparison with the earlier isolation of their new home, they

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felt that the country was becoming quite densely peopled. But away to the southwest and west of them, not more than twenty-five miles distant, swarmed a host of neighbors whose presence there always oppressed their imaginations like the sight of a low, black bank of thunder clouds when they looked toward that quarter of the horizon. For southwest, at Red Wood Falls, was the Lower Agency, the assembling place of the M'dewakanton and the Wakpekute Indians, and west was the Upper Agency, on the Yellow Medicine River, where lived or congregated several thousand Sissetons and Wahpetons. Still further west and extending away to Big Stone Lake, nearly one hundred miles distant, were some other agencies and missions, where greater or less bodies of Indians of the above tribes made their headquarters. The Sissetons and Wahpetons on the Yellow Medicine were not greatly to be feared. Many of them had become Christians under the wise and kindly training of such heroic missionaries as Thomas L. Riggs and Thomas S. Williamson, who with their families had for years lived and maintained schools among them. Assisted

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by the United States Government, many of these Indians had come into the possession of good homes and farms and were rapidly becoming prosperous and accustomed to the ways of civilization.

But the M'dewakantons and Wakpekutes at the Lower Agency were of a different character. Few of them had ever shown a disposition to settle down to industry, and generally they spent their time out on the limitless western prairies of the then newly erected Territory of Dakota, living the wild, free life of their ancestors and coming to the Agency only when one of the annual payments was due them for the lands in Minnesota which they had sold to the Government several years before. At such times they were usually accompanied to the Agency by many turbulent spirits from the Sioux tribes living further west, who came to share in the Government's bounty and the feasting and celebrating which commonly followed its distribution.

In the month of August, 1862, the distribution of the Government payment, for various reasons, had been long delayed, and the wild Indians, waiting in idleness for it to come instead of being, as they

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should have been, out on the prairies hunting buffalo, became constantly more restless, suspicious and arrogant as time went on. The idea gained strength among them that the Government intended to cheat them of the payment. Moreover, they had heard many rumors of the great civil war in which the United States was engaged, and many white people among them did not hesitate to make them believe that the Nation was about to be overthrown, which, indeed, did not seem improbable in 1862 in view of the many reverses which the Union armies were suffering. Such reports, coupled with the fact that most of the United States troops along the Minnesota frontier had been sent to the South and that those remaining were few and scattered, caused the leaders of the hostile element among the Minnesota Indians to believe that the time had come when the whites might be driven back beyond the Mississippi, leaving the Indians again in possession of all their old territories west of that stream. At the time the Briscoe family had come into the country this feeling did not yet exist among the Indians, but during the Spring and Summer of 1862 many exciting inci-

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dents had occurred at the Agencies and elsewhere, in which the growing arrogance and self-confidence of the hostiles had been made plain. Of these incidents Mr. Briscoe had been made aware through his occasional trips to Fort Ridgely after supplies, and, having had some previous experience of the ways of Indians in the Southwest, he had been disquieted and apprehensive for the future. But he had kept his misgivings to himself as far as possible, not caring to alarm his family needlessly.

He knew that, early in August, Little Crow, the hereditary chief of the M'dewakantons, had been deposed from the chieftainship by his fellow tribesmen because of his attitude on an unpopular treaty made sometime before, and that the crafty old chief was eager to find some means of recovering his lost honors. He knew that Inkpaduta, the most cruel and bloodthirsty leader of all the Sioux Nation, together with a throng of his outlawed followers who had participated with him in the atrocious massacre of the white settlers at Spirit Lake, Iowa, in 1857, was hovering about the Lower Agency and mingling with the four or five thousand dissatisfied Indians who were

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gathered there, waiting with increasing impatience for the arrival of the annuity, and in a mood to listen eagerly to any suggestions of massacre and pillage which might be poured into their ears by Inkpaduta and his villainous companions. But what he did not know until he rode into Fort Ridgely on that terrible morning of August 18, 1862, was that on the previous day a wandering party of young M'dewakanton braves had murdered three white men and two white women near the hamlet of Acton, forty miles north of Fort Ridgely and about twenty from his own claim; that the young assassins had then ridden post-haste to the Lower Agency and with their news of bloodshed, which was like a match in a powder magazine, had set the whole savage horde assembled there into a frenzy for the blood of the whites; that Little Crow, seeing in a flash the opportunity for regaining the chief control of his tribe and, indeed, of the whole Sioux Nation, by leading them in a triumphant war, had given the word to the Indians — who had instinctively turned to him in the crisis — for a general uprising and massacre of all the whites; and that, in accordance with his orders and

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the mad impulse of the crowd, they had swarmed over the Agency, slaughtering every white person whom they could find,— store-keepers, Government employees, men, women, and children.

All these things Mr. Briscoe knew, though in a confused and imperfect way, when he met his wife after his swift homeward journey from Fort Ridgely. But, being a brave man and one who had served his country with honor and courage during the Mexican War, he faced the situation with coolness and at the same time began preparing swiftly for the instant flight of his family to the fort. He realized that this was imperative if they were to escape destruction.

When her husband, as previously mentioned, started for the pasture, Mrs. Briscoe reëntered the house, a log building of three rooms, quite capacious for the region and the time, and pulling a trunk from the corner of each of the bedrooms, began hastily filling them with the family clothing and a few books, standard works, much worn but of good editions and carefully kept. From a locked cupboard drawer in the kitchen she brought a small box containing a few

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pieces of handsome silver ware, some of recent pattern but most of it old, into which she looked carefully before depositing it in one of the trunks. Two small oil paintings in frames she packed carefully, and when these had been disposed of in the trunks little remained in the slenderly furnished house except its rude furniture, largely homemade, the bedding and the pots and pans and crockery dishes in the kitchen. She had just begun taking these down and arranging them in a large box when a boy of about fifteen years, straight and tall for his age, with light complexion, light hair, and keen gray eyes, bounded into the kitchen from outside, closely followed by Tommy, who was merely a smaller, eight-year-old edition of himself. The elder lad stopped short, regarding Mrs. Briscoe's preparations for departure with startled eyes.

"What 's the matter, mother?" he exclaimed. "What are you going to do?"

"Your father has just come back from the fort, Al. Have n't you seen him?"

"No, mother."

"He has gone to the pasture for Monty. We must

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drive to the fort at once, this afternoon. The Indians have broken out at the Lower Agency and the report at Fort Ridgely is that they have killed many white people."

"Whew-w!" whistled Al. "That 's bad, is n't it? What will become of the hay?"

"Let 's stay here and fight 'em!" cried Tommy, his head thrown back and his eyes flashing. "Why should we run away from a lot of bad Indians? They won't dare hurt us with papa here."

"Hush, Tommy," said his mother, yet not without a glance of pride at the fearless little fellow, so like his father. "There are a great many of them and we are far away from help."

"I don't care," persisted Tommy. "We could block up the doors and windows, and they can't shoot through these thick logs."

"No, Tommy," interrupted his brother, patting the small boy's shoulder, "but they could burn the house, and then where should we be?"

"Run for the woods."

"And be shot there, out of hand. No, no! Mother, are the trunks ready to put in the wagon?"

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"Yes, but wait for your father to help you with them. You and Tommy can take out the mattresses and pillows. The fort will probably be full of refugees, and we shall need our bedding."

At this moment Mr. Briscoe entered.

"Hello, Al, boy," he said, in his usual tone, as if nothing unusual had happened.

"Hello, father," returned Al, while Tommy ran to Mr. Briscoe for another kiss. "You got back early."

"Yes," answered his father, simply. He glanced at his son, and the two pairs of steady gray eyes looked understandingly into each other for a second. Then Mr. Briscoe walked to a shelf and took down an army musket which hung, together with a double-barrelled shotgun, on a rack beneath it. The musket was loaded, but he took off the old percussion cap and replaced it with a new one. He loaded the shotgun from a powder horn and shot flask on the shelf and then carefully examined a large, six-shot, 44-calibre Starr revolver, also already loaded, of a model at that time recent, in which each chamber was loaded from the front with powder and ball and fired by a

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percussion cap. By this time his wife, aided by Annie, had the kitchen utensils in the box. Having put the weapons in condition for instant use, Mr. Briscoe said:

"Now, Al, we can load these heavy things in the wagon. We want to take the saddle and the new plough, too; we can't afford to have them destroyed while we 're gone. Tommy, turn Spot out in the pasture with the calf. She can get water from the creek, and there is plenty of grass for her. It is a good thing that calf is n't entirely weaned yet. We will leave the barn door open for the chickens to go in at night. Monty and Chick are feeding now. As soon as they have finished we must be ready to hitch up."

When they had placed the first trunk in the wagon and were alone, Mr. Briscoe turned to his son.

"Al," he said, speaking rapidly and in a low voice, "be careful not to alarm your mother and the children, but you must know that we are in the greatest danger and that our only chance of safety lies in getting to the fort without the least delay. The Indians at the Lower Agency have gone mad. They

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have killed every white they could lay their hands on and have started to sweep the whole country clean. Some of them may come here at any moment. My boy —" He laid his hand on Al's shoulder and his voice became very earnest. He spoke almost as if he felt a premonition of coming events. "My boy, I know I can trust you; you are almost a man in judgment and understanding. If we should encounter Indians before we reach the fort and anything should happen to me, remember that your first care must be your mother and your little brother and sister. Protect them with your life but keep cool and do not throw it away. And afterward,— well, my boy, just do your duty by our dear ones and yourself as you honestly see it; no one can do more. And remember always that you are the son of a soldier."

Al's face paled a little beneath the tan while his father was speaking but he returned the latter's gaze steadily until he had finished. Then he replied:

"Why, father, nothing is going to happen to you. But of course I shall remember what you say and

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always try to do the best I can by mother and the children."

"I know you will, Al. Now, let us load that trunk and box and the rest of the things."

They continued their work rapidly while Mrs. Briscoe was busy putting up some food to take along and placing the rest in the root cellar back of the house where it might keep from spoiling as long as possible during their absence. The day was hot and sultry, but the sky was beautifully blue, with here and there white, fleecy clouds floating lazily across it. Green, gently rolling prairies stretched away on every hand, broken here and there by patches of dark, cool woodland where the trees stood clustered on a slope or marked the winding course of some ravine or sluggish creek. From the Briscoe cabin could be caught glimpses between the trees north of it of the hay-cocks on the sun-flooded meadow, where Al and Tommy had been working. It was a tract of native prairie grass and a small one, for Mr. Briscoe had mowed it with a scythe. No sound broke the stillness of the early afternoon except the

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rustle of the breeze through the treetops and the piping of a chickadee which had perched on a sunflower stalk beside the stable. It seemed impossible that in the midst of such peaceful surroundings the horrors of savage massacre and warfare could be abroad in the land; and so Al thought as he looked about him, just as his father and he finished loading the last of the household goods which they intended to take with them.

They were starting to the barn after the horses when they heard the breaking of branches and a commotion among the bushes in the strip of woodland toward the meadow. Mr. Briscoe and his son turned in sudden apprehension and saw six Indians, one after another, issue from the woods and ride toward them. They were mounted on ponies and were naked except for breech-clouts, while their heads were decked with feathers and streaming war-bonnets, and their faces and bodies hideously bedaubed with paint. Mr. Briscoe turned and walked deliberately toward the house.

"Don't run," he cautioned Al, in a low tone. "But go in and stick the revolver in your pocket

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under your coat, and set the guns just inside the kitchen door. Tell your mother if she hears a shot to run with the children from the bedroom door and hide in the rushes along the creek. I 'll meet the Indians here." He stopped by the kitchen door. Then suddenly he asked, "Where 's Tommy?"

"In the house, I think," answered Al. But Tommy was not in the house. He had bethought himself of the eggs and was in the barn hunting them, unconscious of the approaching visitors.

Al disappeared in the kitchen, and Mr. Briscoe walked toward the ominous group of callers, who came on in silence until they reached the door, each holding with one hand a rifle or musket laid across the neck of his pony. They looked at the loaded wagon, which betrayed the impending flight of the family.

"How," said Mr. Briscoe, smiling and extending his hand.

No responsive smiles lit the faces of the Indians. They regarded him in gloomy silence while their leader, a fellow of lighter hue than the rest, evidently a half-breed, sprang to the ground and, ignor-

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ing Mr. Briscoe's extended hand, said, gruffly, in broken English,

"We want food."

"You shall have it," replied Mr. Briscoe. "Wait a minute."

He stepped toward the door but the half-breed was before him.

"We take what we want," he said, jerking his head toward his followers. "Come on."

Mr. Briscoe saw that conciliation was impossible. Once within the house they would have the family at their mercy. He stepped inside the door and with one push of his powerful arm thrust the half-breed out on the step.

"Stay out, and I 'll feed you. But not if you come in," he said.

Al, looking through from the next room, saw his father's action and instantly understood that it meant trouble. With the sudden authority of a man in the emergency, he exclaimed to his mother, pushing her toward the south door,

"Run to the creek, you and Annie! Keep out of

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sight; hide in the reeds. We 'll take care of Tommy."

Then he ran back through the house toward his father. He reached him in less time than it takes to tell it; but the half-breed, cursing frightfully as he reeled back from Mr. Briscoe's thrust, had already shouted to his companions,

"Shoot him!"

One of the mounted Indians threw his musket to his shoulder but Mr. Briscoe, seizing the shotgun which Al had set beside the door, was quicker than the savage. His shot rang out and the Indian pitched headlong to the ground. Before he could cock the other hammer or even spring aside from the doorway, the half-breed's rifle cracked.

"My God! Mary!" gasped Mr. Briscoe, clutching his hand to his breast. He wheeled, staggered a step or two into the room and then sunk to the floor at Al's feet, dead.

It had all happened so quickly that the poor boy's brain was reeling with the horror of it. But in an instant he saw the half-breed's form silhouetted in

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the doorway, an evil grin overspreading his face. Mechanically Al raised the revolver in his hand and fired. Without a word, his father's murderer tumbled backward through the doorway and rolled out on the ground. Al stepped to the door. In one swift glance he saw three of the four remaining Indians galloping furiously away toward the meadow; he saw Tommy, half way between the barn and house, running toward the latter, and he saw the fourth Indian, leaning far over from his pony's side, swooping down upon the boy. The warrior looked back toward the house and in that instant's glimpse Al noted that he was a huge fellow, over six feet tall and that along his left cheek, down his neck and clear out on his naked shoulder, extended a long, livid scar as of an old and terrible wound by a sabre or knife. Again Al fired. But the Indian was some distance away and the bullet apparently missed him altogether. Before Al could get another aim the savage had caught Tommy, screaming and struggling, from the ground and, swinging him up on the pony's back, had ridden swiftly after his companions.

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For a moment Al was beside himself with grief and rage. His brother was being carried away under his very eyes, probably to torture and death, and he could do nothing. He ran out madly after the fleeing Indians, shouting senseless threats and waving his arms. But he dared not fire, for the last rider held Tommy, struggling fiercely in his iron grip, as a shield between himself and pursuing bullets. In a few seconds all the Indians had disappeared in the strip of woods and then Al remembered his mother and sister. He abandoned his futile pursuit and ran to the house, not even glancing at the dead Indian in the yard nor the one before the door. Rushing into the kitchen, he threw himself in a paroxysm of grief beside his father's body, crying out to him and vainly striving to discover a sign of life in the quiet face, already grown so peaceful under the soothing touch of death. At length, with dry, silent sobs shaking his body, he rose slowly to his feet, closed and locked the door, composed his father's limbs and spread a cloth over his face. Then he picked up the musket, got the powder horn and box of bullets from the shelf, and,

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with one last glance at the still form on the floor, ran swiftly through the house and out, striking directly down the slope toward the marshy ground along the creek.

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CHAPTER II

THE FLIGHT THROUGH THE DARKNESS

AL had almost reached the nearest reeds when he heard a shot off to his left and looking in that direction saw Spot, the cow, sink to her knees and then topple over on her side. An Indian with rifle held aloof, exulting over this piece of slaughter, was galloping toward her. Al crouched low and ran into the reeds.

"Mother! Mother!" he called, softly, for the Indian was too far away to hear.

"Here," answered his mother's voice, not far off, and in a moment he had crept to her. Annie, crying softly, was beside her, and they were lying well hidden in a dense thicket of reeds close to the creek.

"Where is your father?" whispered Mrs. Briscoe, the instant he reached her, gazing at him with wide, terror-stricken eyes.

"Why, he — he — can't come now," Al faltered.

"He is killed," said Mrs. Briscoe, simply, in a lifeless voice.

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Her son did not look at her.

"Yes," he said, almost inaudibly.

It seemed to him that the end of all things was closing down upon them. His mother did not weep; she was past tears. She did not even move, but her face was almost like chalk.

"And Tommy?" she asked presently.

"The Indians have carried him away," answered Al.

Mrs. Briscoe bowed her head upon her knees.

"Oh, my little boy, my baby boy!" she moaned. "Why should I live any longer with them gone?"

Al, stunned by the tragedies of the past few minutes, had nearly reached the lowest depths of despair. He felt numb and helpless, but at his mother's heartbroken cry a sudden rush of vitality and determination reanimated him. He recalled his father's words: "Remember that your first care must be your mother and your little brother and sister." He leaned forward and put his arm around his mother's shoulders.

"Mother," he said, "don't say that. You must live for Annie's sake and mine,— and Tommy's.

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We shall get him back; they will not hurt him, he is so young and bright. When we reach the fort the soldiers will send out after him."

By a mighty effort Mrs. Briscoe controlled herself. Her son's words had aroused her.

"You are right, Al," she said. "I must live for you and Annie and Tommy. But can we start for the fort now?"

"I am afraid we shall have to stay here till dark," he replied. "The Indians are still around. I will crawl up where I can get a look."

Leaving the musket beside his mother he crept up through the reeds until, by raising his head cautiously, he could see the house, about three hundred feet away at the top of the slope. An Indian was coming out of the barn leading Chick and Monty, both animals rearing and plunging wildly, for a horse brought up in civilization fears an Indian as much as he does a wolf. Al also saw columns of smoke beginning to arise from the roofs of the house and barn and realized with a terrible pang that his father's body was about to be incinerated in the ruins of his home. He felt a mad desire to rush

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from his concealment upon the savages and to fight them single-handed. But he restrained himself, for he realized that he would have no chance even against the four who were certainly there and who, for all he knew, might now have been joined by others. He lay there watching until the house and barn were wrapped in flames. Then two of the Indians rode out in opposite directions and making wide detours, circled around toward the swampy tract. Then he crept hastily back to his mother and gave her the revolver, the two empty chambers of which he had already re-loaded, himself taking the musket.

"They are going to search for us, mother," he whispered. "We must keep perfectly still. If they should find us and I should be hit, shoot Annie and then yourself. Never let them take you alive. But if there are only four of them we still have a good chance."

No more was said, and for a long time they lay quiet, their ears sharpened to unnatural keenness, listening to the snapping of reeds in the marsh to the east and west of them but never very close. The

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conviction at last came upon Al that their hunters, few in number, were afraid rather than anxious to find them, and he began to breathe easier. After more than an hour had elapsed he heard horses splashing in the creek above their hiding-place, and presently he crept again to the edge of the reeds. The house and barn were smouldering heaps of ashes, and the wagon was gone. No one was around the ruins but presently he saw, far off on a rise of the prairie to the eastward several horsemen, mere specks in the distance. He conjectured that it was the party which had wrought their ruin, bound for the Millers, their nearest neighbors, seven miles away. He wished ardently that he might warn the Millers but it was out of the question, so he went back to his mother and sister, and through the remaining hours of the afternoon and until darkness fell they lay in their concealment. Then very cautiously, under cover of the darkness, he piloted them across the creek, over several hills and low places, and so at last, two or three miles south of the claim, into the faintly marked road leading away to Fort Ridgely.

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It is needless to enter into the details of that long and nerve-wracking journey. Not a moment of it was free from the dreadful fear of encountering enemies in the darkness, and, exhausted by excitement and grief, they dragged their way through the night, stopping every few yards to listen or peer into the gloom. Annie, utterly worn out, sometimes fell to the ground asleep, and then Al and Mrs. Briscoe had to take turns carrying her. Here and there at wide intervals around the vast circle of the horizon appeared a far distant, dull, yellow glow which they knew only too well must arise from other wrecked and burning homes like their own. Now and then the exhaustion of Mrs. Briscoe and Annie compelled them to sink down for a few moments' rest and it was almost daybreak when they finally reached a point which Al knew must be close to the cabin of the Olsens, about eight miles from Fort Ridgely, though they could see nothing of the house in the darkness. Evidently, therefore, it had not been burned, else they could have discerned the smouldering embers. Al saw the first faint streaks of dawn in the East and, realizing that they dared

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go no further by daylight, he led the way to a small clump of timber which he remembered, lying about a quarter of a mile east of the Olsens' buildings. He found a safe hiding-place for his mother and sister in a dense thicket of bushes under the trees, within a few feet of which he could himself lie and have a clear view of the Olsen house and its immediate vicinity. Here they remained until probably ten o'clock in the morning, Al all the time keeping a close watch on the house. Not a person nor an animal was about the place save a few chickens which he could see scratching in the yard, and he concluded that the Olsens must have been warned, perhaps by Mr. Briscoe himself on his homeward ride, and had escaped to the fort the day before. The Briscoes had not tasted food since the previous noon, and though neither his mother nor Annie would confess to being hungry, Al knew that they all needed nourishment in order to be able to continue their journey after nightfall. He determined to creep up to the deserted house in the hope of finding some food there, if nothing more than a few eggs in the log stable. Handing the revolver to his

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mother and dragging the musket along beside him, he made his way with painful slowness across the strip of open prairie between the woods and the house. On his way he saw nothing to alarm him, though he noted that just west of the house was a rise in the prairie, evidently concealing a depression beyond, into which he could not see. But no tree tops were visible over the rise, and he did not believe that any Indians would attempt to hide in an open valley. He made a hurried search through the house, which consisted of a single room, and was rewarded by finding a scant half-loaf of very stale bread. Nothing else could he find, for the family had evidently taken all their possessions, including food, in their flight. He was just about to start to the stable in a search for eggs when his heart suddenly seemed to stop beating at the sound of galloping hoofs just back of the house. To his startled ears it sounded like a hundred horses. His only thought was to get back to his mother and sister and, seizing the musket, he dashed out of the doorway and leaped away toward the trees, casting only one glance behind. It showed him a group of eight

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or ten mounted Indians just riding up on the other side of the house. His apprehension was such that he did not notice that they were dressed in civilized garments until he heard a voice shout in English and in a reassuring tone;

"Wait, boy, wait! we no hurt you!"

He ventured another glance behind and saw all the party save one standing still, their rifles held aloft in sign of peace. The remaining one was still riding toward him but his rifle was also held up. Al realized that they could easily have shot him in his tracks had they wished, and their failure to do so encouraged him. He halted while the lone Indian rode up to him, dismounted and extended his hand, which Al hesitatingly took. But the grasp was hearty and firm.

"We no hurt you," repeated the Indian. "We Christian Indian from Yellow Medicine. We hunting for whites to save from the bad M'dewakantons that make the much kill. We take you to Fort Ridgely. More white people there?" He pointed to the timber toward which Al had been running.

The boy hesitated a moment. The Indian's ap-

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pearance and words, and still more his manner, inspired his confidence, and he found a brighter hope springing up within him than he had felt since his father's death. But should he trust his mother and Annie to these Indians when they had just suffered so terribly at the hands of others of the same race? Perhaps they were deceiving him in order to draw the rest of his party into their power and would then kill or torture them all. But, on the other hand, if the Indians were hostile he was already at their mercy, so his protection was lost to his mother and sister. Could they make their way to the fort alone if he should deny their presence now and go with the Indians himself, either to safety or death? He did not believe they could. But something kept telling him he must trust the Indian who stood before him, so friendly and earnest. He was every inch an Indian but his face lacked the expression of savage ferocity borne on the faces of the war party which had attacked them the day before. It seemed softened by better influences, and Al could hardly believe that he was treacherous. He took his difficult resolution.

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"Yes," he answered. "There are more over there."

The Indian smiled. "Good," said he. "We take you all to the fort. You go get them." Then he added a little proudly, "We save since yesterday, one, two, six white family."

Al went into the woods and informed his mother that rescuers had come to them and, without mentioning their character, led her and Annie out. Mrs. Briscoe was much alarmed when she first saw the party of Indians assembled to meet them, but the latter greeted her so kindly and sympathetically that she soon felt easier. Three of the red men dismounted in order that she and Annie and Al might ride; and so, with the Indians leading their ponies, the cavalcade started southward at once in the direction of the fort. Al found that his confidence had not been misplaced, for in less than two hours they rode into the fort, safe but very weary and depressed.

Fort Ridgely was nothing more than a collection of buildings,—quarters for troops, storehouses, stables, and the other structures necessary for a per-

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manent military establishment, standing on an exposed hill surrounded by ravines and having no stockade or other defences whatever around it; for it was designed merely as a cantonment and supply depot and not as a defensive fortification. When the Briscoes entered it on that afternoon of August 19, it presented a scene of confusion and distress hard to imagine. It was thronged with refugees,—men, women, and children, from all the surrounding country, many of them destitute of everything save the clothes they wore. Some were wounded or badly burned in escaping from houses set on fire by their assailants; and others were arriving now and then who had escaped almost miraculously from the devastated section about the Lower Agency or from more distant points in other directions. These people were being fed from the stores in the Government warehouse; and the post barracks were not large enough to accommodate them, for, fortunately, more troops had arrived since the day before.

Mrs. Briscoe soon found a friend in the warm-hearted Mrs. Olsen, who, as Al had conjectured, had come in on the previous day with her husband and

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children after having received warning of the uprising from Mr. Briscoe. Mrs. Olsen burst into tears on learning of the sad fate of the man to whom they very likely owed their own lives, and of the carrying off of poor little Tommy. She instantly brought them food, and after they had refreshed themselves, she insisted on Mrs. Briscoe and Annie taking her bed in their covered wagon and resting, at least until more commodious quarters could be found for them. Having seen his mother and sister thus as comfortably cared for as present circumstances would permit, Al started out to look for another place for them which would not so greatly inconvenience the Olsens, and to learn what could be done about sending pursuers after the Indians who had carried away Tommy.

Making his way among the groups of people, many of them disconsolate and weeping, and among the wagons, the animals, and the heaps of household goods scattered in confusion over the open parade ground in the centre of the fort, Al suddenly felt a hand slap his shoulder while a familiar voice said,

"Hello, Al Briscoe! When did you get here?"

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He looked around and saw Wallace Smith, a young fellow of about his own age, whom he had met at the fort several times during the past year when he had come in after supplies. Wallace's father kept a general merchandise store just outside the fort, at which the Briscoes had done most of their trading, and it was toward this store that Al was walking when he encountered Wallace.

"I just came in with my mother and sister," returned Al, shaking hands, and then he related briefly the events of the last twenty-four hours. Wallace was very sympathetic and at once took Al to the store. Here Mr. Smith told him that he would find a place for Mrs. Briscoe and Annie to sleep that night, in one of the rooms occupied by his own family above the store. As for Al, he could sleep in the store itself, in company with a number of men who were to be accommodated there. But when Al mentioned his hope of having an immediate pursuit made after Tommy's captors, Mr. Smith shook his head.

"I 'm afraid you will find it can't be done now, my boy," he said. "There are too few men here.

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But you can see the commanding officer and ask him."

The boys, accordingly, left the store and walked toward the headquarters building.

"Can't the Indians capture this place pretty easily?" asked Al, looking about. "I don't see what there is to keep them back."

Wallace looked serious. "Well, I don't know," he answered. "The officers seem to think we can stand them off if they come, and I 'm afraid they surely will. Most of the men are busy now putting the buildings in shape for defence. There are about a hundred soldiers of the Fifth Minnesota Infantry here, for Lieutenant Sheehan was recalled by a messenger sent yesterday, and he got back with his men a little while ago. He is in command now. Have you heard about Captain Marsh?"

Al had not.

"Why, he marched for the Lower Agency yesterday morning with forty-five men, as soon as he heard of the outbreak there. They were ambushed by the Indians at the ferry across the Minnesota and, though they seem to have fought splendidly, all

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the men were killed except fifteen, who finally got back here. Captain Marsh himself was drowned in trying to swim the river. So, you see, there is a third of our force cut off at one blow. But a messenger was sent after Major Galbraith,— he is the agent, you know, at the Upper Agency,— at the same time that one went for Lieutenant Sheehan. Major Galbraith started yesterday for St. Paul with a company of half-breed recruits for the Union army. They are called the Renville Rangers. They ought to be back here pretty soon and will add fifty more men. Then there are a good many refugees, probably one hundred, who can fight, and we have several cannon, with a regular army sergeant in charge of them. The Indians, you know, are deadly afraid of cannon. So we ought to be able to make a pretty good defence, though I wish there were a stockade."

"Did you say that Major Galbraith's company is made up of half-breeds?" inquired Al, remembering with a shudder the evil face of the wretch who had shot his father and whom he himself had killed.

"Yes. But most of them are reliable fellows,

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otherwise they would not be willing to leave their country and go South to fight the rebels."

By this time they had reached the headquarters building, and Al saw, standing in front of it, five or six of the Indians who had brought them in.

"Who are those Indians, Wallace?" he asked. "They are some of the party who rescued us."

Wallace looked closely at the red men, who were standing idle with their ponies, evidently waiting for some one who was inside the building.

"Why, those are Sissetons from the Upper Agency," he said. "Probably John Otherday, Solomon Twostars or some of the Renvilles are with them. They have been going around the country all to-day and last night, warning white people and bringing them in and there are other parties of Sissetons and Wahpetons doing the same thing; though it 's mighty dangerous business, for the hostiles are almost as bitter against them as against the whites. Very few of the Upper Indians seem to have joined the uprising. They are mostly Christians, you know, and their conduct shows the great work of the missionaries."

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The boys entered the headquarters building, and though Lieutenant Sheehan was surrounded by many men, all urgently anxious to transact their business with him, Al presently found an opportunity to tell him of Tommy's capture and to ask that men be sent after him. The officer listened intently to the story and when it was finished, laid his hand kindly on Al's shoulder.

"My boy," said he, with much emotion, "God knows, I wish I could send men after your brother instantly; I know how you feel, and especially how your mother must feel, and I would gladly do it for your poor father's sake, for he was a gallant officer in the Mexican War. But there are two dozen people here already who have lost members of their families in the same way; and for many of them the situation is much worse than yours, because those they have lost are grown and are likely to be killed or tortured by the Indians, while your brother is a child, and I don't believe they will hurt him. But I have had to tell every one the same thing; I can do nothing now. This place is likely to be attacked by a thousand or more Indians at any moment and

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we have not one-tenth enough men to defend it properly. Not a man can be spared from here now, for it will be all we can do to save ourselves and all these women and children from massacre. Probably in a few days we shall have hundreds of troops from St. Paul and the East, and then we can go after these infernal red murderers and punish them and rescue their living victims. But, meantime, you must be prepared to stand with the rest of us in defending your mother and little sister. And I think you are a lad who will do your share." He glanced approvingly at Al's straight figure and steady eyes.

"I shall try to, sir," answered Al.

"I know you will," said the Lieutenant. "You had better go and help the men who are working on the storehouse."

He pointed to the building mentioned and then turned to several men who were waiting for him; while Al, very much downcast at his failure but still feeling a little more hopeful of Tommy's safety because of Lieutenant Sheehan's words, walked out again with Wallace.

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CHAPTER III

BESIEGED IN FORT RIDGELY

THE remainder of that afternoon and the following night passed without serious alarms, but it was heavy with labor for the little garrison. The roofs of the storehouses and of the barracks for enlisted men were covered with earth to protect them against fire arrows, and their sides were loopholed. Earth and log barricades were erected at various points overlooking the heads of ravines. Little could be done to protect the officers' frame quarters or the log stables and outbuildings, which lay, much exposed, at the western corner of the fort. Early in the evening Major Galbraith's Renville Rangers came into the fort, forty-five strong, weary with a twelve-hour forced march from St. Peter, where they had been overtaken by the courier sent to recall them. A large majority of these men remained loyal to their duty during the ensuing days

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but a few of them, their slumbering ferocity roused by the reports of the uprising of their savage kindred, skulked away and joined the hostiles, committing before they left an act of dastardly treachery. Several small cannon, in charge of the gallant Ordnance Sergeant John Jones, of the United States regular army, were placed in commanding positions in the fort, and that night a heavy chain guard was posted all around the place. But, though several false alarms were given, no Indians appeared, and the night passed in reasonable quiet. Mrs. Briscoe, still too overwhelmed with dumb grief to do more than mechanically comply with the arrangements made for her and Annie by Al and her friends, passed the night not uncomfortably in the hospitable but over-crowded home of the Smiths; and Al slept with a dozen men and boys, including Wallace, on the floor of the store below, his musket and revolver beside him.

The early part of the next day was spent like the one preceding it, in further strengthening the barricades and buildings, in cleaning weapons, and, beyond that, simply in endless discussion of the

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ghastly events of the past few days and uneasy speculation upon the future. Though many of the refugees would have gladly given all that remained of their shattered fortunes to get to St. Paul or some other place of assured security, the attempt was not to be thought of, for it was known that the hostiles were skulking all about the post and any party which might start out for the East would undoubtedly be set upon and destroyed. A few scattered survivors of the massacre continued to come in now and then, exhausted, famished, often wounded, and always nearly insane from the unnumbered perils and rigorous hardships through which they had passed. An attack on the fort was expected at any time, as Lieutenant Sheehan's words to Al had indicated, and the only cause for wonder was that it had not come sooner. Indeed, had the defenders but known it, Little Crow had been urgent in the councils of the Indians for an overwhelming assault on Fort Ridgely on the evening of the eighteenth, immediately after the bloody defeat of Captain Marsh's detachment. But some of his more cautious followers

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opposed the plan on the ground that many of the warriors were still out over the country, murdering settlers and destroying property, so that the full strength of their forces could not yet be brought against the fort. This view was eagerly sustained by the strong element among the hostiles who were opposed to the whole outbreak on principle, seeing in it nothing but ultimate disaster for their people, yet who did not dare openly to champion the cause of the whites for fear of being summarily dealt with by their more violent associates. This element hoped that a delay in the attack on the fort might enable the whites to gather a sufficient force there to repulse it when it should be made, and assuredly the delay had rendered it possible for the defenders to place the post in a much better state of defence by the afternoon of August 20 than it had been two days before.

It was about one o'clock on that hot, still afternoon when Al and Wallace stepped out of the Smiths' store, having just finished their dinner. They were about to start over to the storehouse of the fort,

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where some work was still being done, when Wallace noticed a loose horse wandering down into one of the ravines not far from the store.

"That 's one of our horses," he exclaimed. "He must have slipped his halter. If he goes far the Indians will catch him. Come on; let 's get him!"

Followed by Al, he dashed into the stable for a halter and then started on a run for the ravine. The latter was quite wide and thickly fringed with bushes and small trees, while the bottom of it was carpeted with luxuriant grass, which the horse was nibbling as they came up. But their appearance startled him and with a snort he leaped past them and galloped on some distance further, when he again halted. The boys followed, Wallace this time approaching more diplomatically and saying in a soothing tone,

"Come, Frank; come boy! Nice boy!"

"He 'll give you a jolt in the ribs if you get too close," warned Al, as he noticed the animal begin to edge his hind feet around in the direction of Wallace.

But Frank was not so mischievous as he looked;

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for in a moment Wallace had the halter on his head and the boys were just about to turn again up the ravine toward the fort, when, without the least warning, there sprang from the bushes not ten yards behind them two Indian warriors, dressed only in breech-clouts and both armed with bows and arrows. Uttering not a sound they sprang toward the boys with the evident intention of taking them alive. Al and Wallace were too dumbfounded to move until the Indians were almost upon them. Then Wallace dropped the horse's halter and, catching up a heavy stick lying at his feet, hurled it at the head of one of the warriors. It caught the savage fairly across the face and he reeled for an instant from the force of the blow, while his companion, somewhat daunted, halted also. The boys ran at full speed up the ravine, not even pausing to note the effect of Wallace's throw, which he afterward admitted had found its mark by pure accident. They had gone but a few yards when an arrow whizzed past Al's head and struck in the ground in front of them. They only ran the faster. A half-dozen more arrows flew by them and then Wallace uttered a cry of pain as

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one struck him fairly in the left arm. But by this time, fortunately, they were at the head of the ravine and only a few feet from the nearest buildings. Al stole a glance behind him, to see that their two pursuers had been joined by more than a dozen others; and then the boys dashed around the corner of the building, out of range, shouting at the tops of their voices,

"Indians! Indians!"

All over the fort men sprang to their feet, seized their guns, and such as were not already behind them rushed to the barricades and protected buildings. But by no means all of them had reached cover when a scattering, but numerous volley of musket shots and arrows was poured into the fort, not only out of the ravine from which the boys had escaped but from a number of others. Al then saw why the Indians following them had not fired on them with guns, for that would have spoiled the contemplated surprise of the fort, which their unexpected appearance in the ravine in pursuit of Frank had, perhaps, precipitated.

The defenders replied to the Indian fire so

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promptly and vigorously that the savages fell back from their first rush and concealed themselves about the heads of the ravines, whence they began a steady and well-sustained fire. The women and children, however, had nearly all reached places of shelter, when Al hurried up to the Smiths' store after his musket and revolver, almost dragging Wallace who, beside himself with pain, was frantically trying to pull the deeply imbedded arrow from his arm. They encountered Mr. Smith and his wife, accompanied by Mrs. Briscoe and Annie, who were fleeing from the exposed store, through which the Indian bullets were crashing, to the shelter of the barracks building.

"Here, Al," cried Mr. Smith, thrusting the latter's musket, revolver, and ammunition into his hands. "Don't go in there; you 'll be killed. Come on, Wallace. God, lad, are you hurt?"

Wallace made no reply, but all of them ran, crouching low, to the barracks, which they reached safely after a race of a few rods, though it seemed like a mile with the bullets and arrows whistling about them. Here Dr. Alfred Muller, the brave as-

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sistant surgeon of the fort, aided by his heroic wife, took charge of Wallace and soon had the arrow extracted from his arm and the painful, though not serious, wound properly dressed. It was the first of nearly a score of similar cases which the Mullers were called upon to treat in Fort Ridgely. Wallace was much distressed at his inability to take his place with the defenders, but Al and Mr. Smith had to leave him in the surgeon's charge and hasten out to join the rest of the active garrison. On their way they encountered Sergeant Jones, working desperately with several other men over the vent of one of the small cannon. Al had already wondered dimly why he had heard none of the cannon firing, but he understood after Mr. Smith had asked,

"Why don't you open with the guns, sergeant? It would scare the Indians worse than anything."

"Can't," replied the sergeant, without looking up from his work. "Some of Major Galbraith's infernal half-breeds have spiked every one of the guns and then skipped out. But I 'll have them in action in a few minutes."

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He continued boring furiously with the drill he was using to clear the nail from the gun's vent and in a moment he shouted,

"Hooray! She 's clear!" Then he added, addressing the cannoneer of the detachment, "Give them two-second shell and spherical case, fast as you can work her. Sweep the head of the ravine and aim low. I 'll see if I can open the next one."

Drill in hand, he rushed away toward another gun some distance off, totally oblivious to the fire opened on him as soon as he appeared on the open ground. Mr. Smith and Al followed him and took their places among a number of others already there, behind a log barricade which stood not far from the next gun and facing the post stables out beyond the western corner of the fort. The men around them were chiefly refugees and some of them were greatly excited, firing rapidly and without aim, while a few others crouched down and did not attempt to shoot at all. There were no officers among them and no one seemed to be in command.

"Don't fire without something to aim at, Al," said

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Mr. Smith. "Wait till you see the flash of a gun or a movement in the grass and then shoot at the spot."

Mr. Smith was armed with a muzzle-loading rifle, which he was firing very slowly and carefully, and Al followed his example, for neither of them had much ammunition. Mr. Smith knew that the other men with them were not much better off, for the small arms ammunition supply of the fort was perilously low, and he tried with some success to induce them to fire more deliberately. The panic-stricken skulkers, however, he could not arouse to their duty. They merely lay still and cursed him when he told them to get up and sneered at their cowardice.

Out to their left, Sergeant Jones was still trying unsuccessfully to open the vent of the field-gun. Occasionally the boom of the gun which he had already repaired roared out above the crackle of musketry, and in the ravine which its fire was sweeping the Indians gave way and retired. Presently he succeeded in getting the second gun into action, and the assailants disappeared from that front also; and by the time he had them all working the Indians had

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become discouraged. Their fire gradually slackened, and as night approached, their main body drew off; though enough warriors still remained in well concealed places to maintain a desultory fire, and the weary garrison, resting on their arms, caught but fitful repose through the hours of darkness, for no one could tell when the attack might be renewed.

The fort remained in a state of siege all the next day until near evening, the garrison taking reliefs in guarding the defences. But about dusk the Indian fire ceased altogether, and total silence settled over the hillsides, which for thirty hours had echoed the turmoil of battle. Three soldiers lay dead within the fort and eight others of the garrison were wounded. The quiet which reigned through the night and the morning of the twenty-second was more disturbing than the uproar which had preceded it. While the latter prevailed, the garrison at least knew where their enemies were and what they were doing, while now no one could tell what new and formidable plans they might be hatching. No one believed that they had given up the hope of taking the fort and those in the garrison most familiar

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with the Indian methods of warfare regarded it as certain that they were making ready for a final, great assault.

Early on the afternoon of the twenty-second it came, beginning with a sudden and tremendous volley fired into the fort from all sides at once. The Indians, in a seemingly countless horde, then sprang up and made a rush for the fort, which seemed about to be overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers. But the garrison was in position and ready for them. Volley after volley poured into the approaching mass of savages, while the shells of the artillery tore through their ranks. Unused to bearing the losses of an open, stand-up fight, the Indians quickly gave way and fled back to the ravines, where, however, they remained, stubbornly pouring in an intense fire, which searched every portion of the fort. Little Crow was some distance behind the Indian lines, directing the general attack, while on the field itself, Mankato, Good Thunder, Big Eagle and other veteran chiefs were leading the savage hosts, which outnumbered the garrison five to one. They pressed the attack relentlessly. Musket and rifle balls tore

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through the officers' wooden quarters and other exposed structures, and now and then a fire arrow whizzed through the air and struck its blazing torch into one of the frame buildings. Soon several of the latter, including the Smiths' store, broke into flames and the roar of the conflagration added to the terrifying confusion of the battle, while stifling smoke clouds rolled across the field, both blinding and choking the defenders.

But though the attack was vigorous all along the line, it was especially so at the western corner of the fort, where the Indians had discovered that if they could gain possession of the exposed stables they could command and render untenable a considerable extent of the interior defences. Al was at the same barricade which he had occupied two days before, but it was being defended now chiefly by men of the Renville Rangers, who were fighting as courageously as the best of veterans. All at once Al saw Lieutenant Sheehan and Lieutenant Gorman, of the Rangers, run up to the field gun near them, and heard Sheehan cry to the gunners:

"Fire shell into the left of those stables! Set

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them afire if you can. The Indians are trying to get in them."

Then the officers ran on to their barricade.

"Boys," shouted Lieutenant Gorman to the Rangers, "those stables on the right must be burned. Come on! Don't go near the ones on the left; the cannon is going to knock them to pieces. Hurry up!"

He sprang across the barricade, and a number of the men without the least hesitation darted after him over the exposed ground in front, their guns trailing beside them and their heads bent low. Hardly thinking what he was doing but eager to be of service, Al followed them, and in the general uproar he did not hear Lieutenant Sheehan shouting to him to come back. The distance was not great, and though the bullets seemed to rain around them, almost before he knew it Al found himself with Lieutenant Gorman and his dusky companions inside the stable, and none of them hurt. Under Lieutenant Gorman's quick orders, the Rangers snatched up handfuls of hay, lighted them, and blew

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them into flames along the inner walls of the building. But Al, during the moment they were thus occupied, peered out through an opening in the western end of the stable. What he saw alarmed him. There were Indians everywhere, just below the edge of the hill out of the direct line of fire from the fort, and a number of them were actually along the outside wall of the stable itself. Al thrust his revolver through the opening and fired three times in rapid succession, with what effect he never knew, for he heard Lieutenant Gorman shout,

"She 'll burn now. Come on, get away! Get away!"

The inner walls of the stable were a seething mass of flames as they fled through the doorway, hearing as they ran the crash and explosion of a shell in the stables beside the one which they had just left. As he sprang back behind the barricade again, Al felt a hand grasp him roughly by the arm, and heard Lieutenant Sheehan's voice saying in his ear:

"You young rascal, what do you mean by running

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out like that and risking your life? You 're not a soldier; I did n't order you out. What would your mother and sister do if you were killed?"

This aspect of the matter had not occurred to Al before. He began to reply, in penitent confusion,

"Why,— I don't know, sir. I —"

"Well, hang it, don't do it again, that 's all," broke in the officer. Then he added, while a half smile came over his face, powder-grimed and wet with perspiration: "Anyhow, you 're a plucky youngster. Your father would be proud of you."

"I should say he is plucky," interjected Gorman. "He started to clean out the redskins over there, but had n't time to finish the job."

The two officers disappeared through the smoke up the line, and Al resumed his methodical musket practice, the Rangers around him now and then glancing at him approvingly, though he did not notice it.

The fire along their immediate front relaxed a little as the stables blazed into ruins and the assailants found that they could not utilize this coveted point of vantage. But the Indians clung to the

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ravines with a stubbornness truly amazing, the utmost efforts of the artillery failing to dislodge them. Presently one of the Rangers kneeling beside Al, with a gesture of despair threw down his gun,—a cumbersome, old-fashioned weapon of the type called "Harper's Ferry muskets," with which all Major Galbraith's men were armed,—and exclaimed,

"No more bullets!"

It was an ominous announcement and one which was very soon followed by others of similar nature, not only at their barricade, but all over the fort. Consumed by the rapid fire which had been necessary to hold back the fierce Indian attack, the small arms ammunition supply of the fort was almost exhausted, and a few moments more of such work would see it all expended. A dreadful contingency faced the defenders. With their ammunition all gone, their assailants would be able to rush in and slaughter them almost at will. One by one the men of the garrison ran out of bullets and the fire perceptibly slackened. The Indians quickly noticed this and, guessing the cause, redoubled their efforts.

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Al, thanks to his careful use of ammunition, still had quite a supply left, but he saw with horror what the general situation was and realized that unless something could be done to relieve it, they would all be massacred in a few minutes. Being under no orders and wishing to be with his mother and sister at the last moment, if this was really at hand, he left the barricade and ran to the barracks building, where they were crowded with the other noncombatants. A distressing scene met his eyes as he entered. Many of the women were gathered in groups, weeping and wringing their hands, their children clinging about them, while here and there others knelt, praying aloud or absorbed in silent supplications. A long row of wounded lay stretched on pallets at one side. But across the room he saw another group, the only one in which the spirit of courage and determination seemed still to prevail. To Al's surprise, his mother was one of this party, apparently perfectly calm and her face lighted by an expression of noble resolution and self-forgetfulness. With her were several other women of like firm spirit, and two or three men, all of them busily

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absorbed in some occupation around a stove in which a hot fire was blazing. Al soon found that they were casting musket balls, their supply of lead consisting of the flattened bullets of the Indians, which men were gathering up outside and bringing to them to be re-moulded. The rapidly increasing supply which they were thus preparing was being augmented by some of Sergeant Jones's artillerymen, who were opening spherical case shot and removing from them the balls, which served perfectly for musket ammunition. Although Lieutenant Sheehan and Sergeant Jones had thought of these providential expedients but a few moments before, already small quantities of the new balls were being taken out and distributed to the men in the defences, whose fire, consequently, was resuming its former volume.

His hope and enthusiasm all returned to Al as soon as he found that a vigorous defence could still be maintained, and after an affectionate embrace and a few words with his mother and Annie, he ran back again to the barricade. It was not long after his return there, and late in the afternoon, that the Indians once more made a determined effort to

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storm the position. Marshalling their forces below the crest of the hill, they rushed up from the ravines in throngs, brandishing their weapons and whooping at the tops of their voices; while the flare of their many-colored war-bonnets and robes, the tiger-like contortions of their muscular, naked bodies, and the glint of rifle barrel and knife blade, flashing back the rays of the sinking sun, made a spectacle as wildly magnificent as it was awe-inspiring. But again the heroic garrison proved equal to the emergency. From barricade and loop-holed wall the infantry poured steady volleys into them, while the artillery, holding its fire until the charge was well under way, lashed their ranks with case shot. Though they had started forward with the utmost enthusiasm, they soon began to hesitate and break. With their undisciplined methods of fighting, the Indian does not live who could withstand such a fire. In a moment they had halted, and a few seconds more saw them scurrying back to the ravines, utterly repulsed, while from the throats of the sturdy little garrison rose cheer after cheer of victory, and men leaped upon the barricades and tossed

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their hats in the air. Every one felt that the enemy had made his last, supreme effort, and such, indeed, proved to be the case. The Indian fire gradually died away, and by nightfall silence again reigned over Fort Ridgely, wrecked, smoking, and shot-torn, but triumphant.

The stables and outlying buildings, with the exceptions of the guard-house and the magazine, were smouldering ruins; the officers' quarters were riddled through and through; the storehouse and barracks were pock-marked and splintered with bullets; nearly all the oxen and mules belonging to the quartermaster's department were captured or killed, and seven more wounded men lay beside those who had been injured two days before. But the fight was won. Through the night the garrison lay on their arms, watching the glare of distant conflagrations off to the southeast, where the defeated Indians were burning farm-houses and stacks as they marched on to the village of New Ulm, sixteen miles away. Fort Ridgely remained undisturbed, though New Ulm, where two hundred and fifty volunteer citizens under the command of Judge Charles E.

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Flandreau had gathered to defend the town and the one thousand five hundred non-combatants in refuge there, was desperately attacked next day, almost wholly burned, and nearly captured by the infuriated savages. Though the Indians seemed to be gone from their vicinity, the occupants of Fort Ridgely were obliged to remain inert for several days longer, and then, at last, on the morning of the twenty-seventh, their eyes were gladdened by the sight of a large column of troops approaching from the eastward, and the little army of Colonel H. H. Sibley, hastily recruited and as yet poorly disciplined and wretchedly armed, but full of ardor, marched into the quadrangle of shattered buildings amid the cheers of the men and the tearful thanksgivings of the women. The never-to-be-forgotten siege was over.

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CHAPTER IV

REFUGEES

THE arrival of Colonel Sibley's troops gave to the destitute refugees in Fort Ridgely their first opportunity of turning from the desperate struggle for immediate self-preservation in which they had been ceaselessly involved for nine days, to contemplate fully the extent of the disaster which had fallen upon them and to consider what their future course must be. To most of them the Indian outbreak and its consequent massacre and pillage had brought the total ruin of their fortunes, for in general they were poor people who had come into the West and started their homes on free Government land, in the hope of acquiring comfort and modest fortunes through years of faithful labor. But to the families which had been so fortunate as to remain intact, losing no loved members at the hands of the savages, the disaster was not irremediable.

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The property they had lost was not, in most cases, of very great value, save as measured by labor; and as their lands still remained to them, they could again enter into occupation as soon as settled conditions were restored, and in a short time recover their former positions. So, although a few such families lost heart and left the country, most of them remained and lived to see the time when they were very glad they had done so.

But with the families which had been shattered by the savages, which had lost father or mother or sons or daughters struck down in the slaughter, the case was far different. And many, alas, were in this condition, for more than one thousand white people had fallen victims to the Indians along the desolated Minnesota frontier during those few mid-August days. Where the head of a family had been lost, his widow and children must either undertake to eke out a precarious existence on the devastated claim from which they had been driven, surrounded by the hard conditions of pioneer life, or they must return to the older parts of the country whence they had originally come, and there seek the aid and pro-

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tection of relatives or friends. The first arrangement was often impossible, for not many a widow with a family of small children could hope to sustain herself in such a country, beautiful and fertile but at that time wild and practically unbroken. For these reasons there was a long and doleful procession of destitute people passing through St. Paul, Winona, and the other towns along the Mississippi River on their way back to the more easterly States during the days of late August and early September, 1862. They came from Fort Ridgely, from New Ulm, from Acton and Forest City and Hutchinson and a score of other little settlements along the border. Among these unfortunate people were to be found the survivors of the Briscoe family, bound for St. Louis, Missouri. How they had finally come to decide upon this course will require some explanation.

When Al first realized, with the advent of Colonel Sibley's troops into Fort Ridgely, that the Indians had been checked and the tide turned, and that the white men were really setting about regaining possession of the country, his first and greatest ambi-

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tion was to set out at once for the rescue of Tommy; his second was to visit the lonely and ruined cabin twenty miles north of the fort and there give the remains of his father tender burial. But he soon found that difficulties lay in the way of accomplishing either of these desires. The army could not instantly spring forth as one man and rush to the rescue of his brother. The soldiers had to be prepared and provided for a campaign which, moreover, even when inaugurated, must be carefully and methodically carried out. Several hundred white captives, among whom it seemed almost certain that Tommy would be found, were in the possession of the Indians. If a precipitate attack should be made upon the latter their captives would, past a doubt, be massacred to a soul. Their release must be accomplished by diplomacy; the Indians must be made to realize that only by the safe delivery of their prisoners could they hope to mitigate the stern punishment which they had richly earned at the hands of the Government, and which would surely be meted out to them sooner or later. To accomplish the safe delivery of the captives might mean weeks of care-

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ful work on the part of the friendly Indians in inducing the hostile element to see the necessity for such action. It might require numerous councils and it might require fighting, properly prepared for.

All this meant that if Al were to take personal part in the rescue of Tommy, they must stay at Fort Ridgely for some time to come; and to stay at Fort Ridgely meant that they must have some money. Here was the most distressing difficulty in the whole situation. The Briscoes had absolutely nothing left; they were penniless. Even their few household goods had been destroyed or carried away by the Indians and these goods, together with their buildings and the handful of live stock and farm implements on their claim, had constituted all their worldly possessions. They had not always been in such a precarious condition; in fact, two years before the period at which our story opens they would not have dreamed that they could ever be reduced to such circumstances as were theirs when we first saw them.

In 1860 the Briscoes had been living in the prosperous little city of Glasgow, Missouri, at that time

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an important centre of steamboat traffic on the Missouri River, drawing to its numerous and well-appointed stores the trade of a wide region of farms and plantations, and to its wharves and warehouses the great crops of hemp and tobacco, corn and grain, vegetables and live-stock with which the whole rich country teemed. Mr. Briscoe's business, the retailing of furniture, was extensive and profitable, his home was as comfortable and attractive as any in the town, and his family lacked for none of the comforts of life, while many of its luxuries were also theirs. Once or twice a year, usually in the summer and winter, when there was something of a lull in the business, they would make a trip to St. Louis, where Mrs. Briscoe's sister, her only near relative, lived with her husband and family. His parents had intended to send Al to an academy in St. Louis in the Fall of 1861, to complete his preparatory education before applying for an appointment as a cadet at West Point. Then came the opening of the Civil War and the beginning of a rapid succession of events in the family, which had forced the abandonment of this

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and of all the other plans which they had cherished for the future.

The opening of hostilities, precipitated by the attack on Fort Sumter, produced a commercial and industrial effect upon the country at large almost as calamitous as the political one; and this was particularly true in the Border States, where sentiment was sharply divided. Mr. Briscoe's business was one which depended to an unusual degree upon conditions of general prosperity and tranquillity. When the people of the community found their incomes destroyed or sharply cut down by general conditions, they could and did get along without new furniture, though they could not get along without groceries or clothing. His business suffered on this account, but it suffered still more from other causes.

Mr. Briscoe had always commanded an unusual degree of popularity in Glasgow since he had gone there, a youth, in 1844, because he had enlisted for the Mexican War, among many other volunteers from the town and from Howard County, in the First Regiment of Missouri Dragoons, under Colonel

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Alexander W. Doniphan; an organization immensely popular in central Missouri at the time. He had served through all the wonderfully romantic campaigns of that regiment with gallantry and distinction, coming out of the war a first lieutenant. He had won his sergeantcy for saving the life of a comrade, another Glasgow youth, in the fight at Brazitos, New Mexico, December 21, 1846; his second lieutenantcy for faithfulness and courage during the long march from Sante Fe to Chihuahua, and his first lieutenantcy for gallantry in the capture of that city from a Mexican army five times as large as the American force, on February 28, 1847. Consequently, on his return to Glasgow he had been regarded as a hero, and the people could not do enough for him, showing their favor in one most practical way by bestowing as much of their trade upon him as they possibly could. He, in turn, entertained the liveliest interest in the exciting events of the Mexican War and the most profound and loyal regard for his old commander, Colonel Doniphan. It was in the latter's honor that he christened his eldest son Alexander Doniphan, and we have seen that he

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even applied the fanciful names, Chihuahua and Montezuma,— shortened for convenience to Chick and Monty,— to his horses, in memory of his days below the Rio Grande.

But the very fact that he had been one of Doniphan's men was equivalent to a declaration that in spirit he was a sympathizer with the political theories and social institutions at that time almost universally accepted by the people of the Southern States, where slavery prevailed; for it was among people of such convictions that Doniphan's regiment had been almost wholly recruited. Because he had been one of them, everybody so naturally assumed that his views agreed with those of his military associates that he was seldom even called upon to express himself. When he was, the fact that he said little, and that of a rather non-committal character, only led people to believe that he did not care for discussion and regretted the political unrest of the time, as, indeed, did many others. This ill-defined position did very well until the beginning of the period of intense agitation and bitterness immediately following the election of Abraham Lincoln to

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the Presidency in the Fall of 1860. He then found himself forced to face the issue frankly and declare, not only to himself but to others, whether he intended to throw in his fortunes with the South in the war which every one foresaw was rapidly approaching, or to stand firmly by the Union.

It was a bitterly hard choice for him to make and one which he deferred as long as possible; for, though both he and his wife were of Northern birth and ancestry, the most cherished associations of their lives had been with Southern people, and they loved the South like their native land. But he believed, and Mrs. Briscoe believed with him, that the Southern idea of destroying the Union was absolutely wrong, and that a true American citizen's allegiance was due, not to any one State or section but to the nation. When, after much painful reflection, he found himself unalterably committed to this conviction, he was a man of too much courage not to declare it. His associates and fellow citizens in the town learned of his attitude first with astonishment, then with resentment, and finally with cold hostility. He had made his choice, he had voluntarily arrayed

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himself against the dearest desires of their hearts and what they conceived to be the most vital interests of their lives. They turned from him as from a betrayer, a traitor, and he suddenly found himself worse than a stranger in the community where for fifteen years past he had been respected and beloved above most other citizens. It was the sad story, as old as organized society, of the dearest private associations torn asunder by the rancor of public controversy. His business suddenly declined to almost nothing. It would not have been so bad if he had made provision for the future. But it had always been so easy to make money that he and his family had spent it just as easily, for it had seemed that the business alone would always continue to provide them with all they might need. His credit with the wholesale houses of St. Louis and the East was large and unquestioned, and when the trouble came his store was full of goods unpaid for. Too long he struggled to dispose of his stock in a town whose people, all at once, either could not or would not buy. Finally, when his creditors, themselves pressed for money by the industrial depression, be-

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gan to harass him, he sold at ruinous sacrifices. But he could not stem the tide. He was forced into bankruptcy, and stock, store building, home and household goods, all went down in the yawning pit of debt; for such was his sense of honor that he would withhold nothing in order to pay to those who had trusted him the money to which they were justly entitled. And he did pay it, dollar for dollar, to the last cent; but when it was paid he had nothing left in the world except a little less than three hundred dollars in cash, a few bits of cherished family silver and bric-a-brac belonging to his wife, and a scanty stock of family clothing. His brother-in-law in St. Louis, Mr. Colton, would gladly have helped him, but he, also, had been brought to the verge of ruin by the business upheaval, and Mr. Briscoe, well knowing this, declined to add a particle to his burdens.

To go into business again at such a time, in another town and without capital, was not to be thought of. Neither was sufficiently remunerative employment to be found, nor could he yet enter the Union army, as he ardently desired to do, leaving

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his family destitute. The free Government lands seemed to offer a home which they could acquire with little difficulty, and a living in the meantime as cheap as could be found anywhere. So they chose Minnesota and went to the claim north of Fort Ridgely, where Mr. Briscoe hoped that in a few years he might develop a farm and accumulate a little money. Then, if the war was not yet over and his services were still needed, he might leave Al in charge for a time and go to the front.

Such, briefly, was the history of the Briscoe family up to the time when we first met with them, and such their plans for the future, so rudely interrupted by the calamities of the Indian outbreak. Without father, without money, without agricultural implements or horses, and without even a home to live in, with the whole country still overrun by hostile savages, it was out of the question, after the relief of Fort Ridgely, for them either to return to their claim or to remain where they were. The only place in the world which seemed to offer a haven of refuge for the time being, at least, was the home of Mrs. Briscoe's sister in St. Louis. Pity-

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ing friends among the other almost equally destitute refugees, even soldiers of the garrison who were touched by the wretched plight of the little family and by Al's manly conduct during the siege, contributed to a small fund sufficient to take them by steamboat to St. Louis; and on one of the last days of August they started for St. Paul with a large party, escorted by a detachment of soldiers.

Before they left, Al and his mother asked and obtained an interview with Colonel Sibley, concerning Tommy. Colonel Sibley was a man of great prominence in Minnesota, having been elected the first Governor of the State after its admission to the Union in 1858. At the time of the Indian outbreak he was living at the mouth of the Minnesota River, where Governor Ramsey sent for him to take command of the troops called out to suppress the uprising, because of his great influence over the Indians and his familiarity with their methods of warfare. He was a gentle, kindly man, whose heart was torn by the loss and suffering of the people along the western border of his State. Mrs. Briscoe and Al called at his headquarters on the morning of the

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day they left for St. Paul. The Colonel received them with his accustomed courtesy, asked them to be seated and, himself taking a chair facing them, listened to Mrs. Briscoe's sad story with deep and compassionate attention. When she had finished he sat, seemingly lost in thought, for a short time, his chin resting on his hand. Then he looked up at Mrs. Briscoe and said:

"Madam, my heart bleeds for you. I wish that it were within my power to restore your little son to you at once. I wish that you might remain in Minnesota in order that you could sooner have the happiness of knowing when he is recaptured. But neither you nor your son here," he glanced at Al, "need feel that your absence will defer the little boy's rescue one moment longer than if you remained here. The recovery of all the white captives is now in the hands of my forces and we shall get them all as soon as we possibly can. I give you my promise, Mrs. Briscoe; I will personally see to it that he is sent to you in St. Louis as soon as it can be done, and if there should be any delay you shall be promptly notified of the facts. Your hus-

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band's remains shall also receive Christian burial whenever a party can visit your claim, and in case any of your property is found there which is of value, I will have it stored here in Fort Ridgely until you return or send for it. Can you tell me, my boy," he turned to Al, "anything of the appearance of the Indian who carried away your brother which might help to identify him?"

"I should know him again instantly, sir, if I saw him," Al replied. "He was a tall fellow, over six feet, I think, and seemed very strong. He had a deep scar, like a knife or sword cut, running down his left cheek and along his neck and shoulder."

"O-ho!" ejaculated the colonel. "That surely ought to make it easy if he is an Indian belonging to any of the tribes in this region. Orderly!"

Instantly a soldier opened the door, came to attention and saluted.

"Tell Major Brown I want to see him."

The orderly disappeared, but in a moment the door opened again admitting Major Joseph R. Brown, a famous Indian trader who had been Major Gal-

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braith's predecessor as Indian agent at the Lower Agency, and who was now in command of one of Colonel Sibley's companies of volunteers. Probably no white man in Minnesota was personally acquainted with more of the Indians in that section. Colonel Sibley and Al described to him the Indian who had carried off Tommy, but Major Brown shook his head.

"I know no Indian in these parts who answers to that description," he replied. "He must be an outsider; perhaps a Yanktonais who has drifted in because there was trouble in the air. There are probably a good many of them around."

This was disappointing intelligence yet enlightening in a way, for though it indicated that Tommy was not in the clutches of any of the Minnesota savages, at the same time it limited his captor to one of the Dakota tribes further west and to that extent simplified the mystery of his whereabouts and possible fate. Colonel Sibley, however, was still of the opinion that he would be found with the other white captives when these should be recovered, as he did

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not believe that a warrior from a distant part of the country would care to burden himself permanently with a prisoner.

With such unsatisfactory conclusions Al and his mother were forced to be content, and though somewhat encouraged by the hopeful and reassuring words of Colonel Sibley, who did his best to cheer them, they began the long journey toward St. Louis with heavy hearts.

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CHAPTER V

HOPE DEFERRED

IT is not necessary to enter into the details of that trip, which was devoid of unusual incidents. In due time the unfortunate family reached their destination, where they were affectionately received by the Coltons and taken into their home. Since the dark days at the beginning of the war the Coltons had been obliged to give up their pleasant home on Morgan Street, in what was then one of the most desirable residence districts of the city, and had moved into a smaller house on Palm Street, far up on the North Side and not many blocks from the St. Louis Fair Grounds. Mr. Colton had succeeded in weathering his reverses and still had his business, that of real estate, down town; but it was in a far from prosperous condition, and his income was hardly sufficient to support him and his family, consisting of his wife and two small children. He had

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had the misfortune, when a young man, to lose his left arm at the elbow so that he was handicapped in the battle of life; but he made up in mental capacity what he lacked in physical, so he had always been able, until the beginning of the war, to make a comfortable living.

On the second evening after their arrival in St. Louis, when supper was over, Mr. Colton asked Al to take a walk with him. They strolled west across the open lots and along the thinly populated streets lying in the direction of the Fair Grounds. Mr. Colton seemed rather abstracted and talked but little; and presently Al asked, abruptly,

"Uncle Will, your business is n't paying very well just now, is it?"

"Well, no, it is n't, Al," Mr. Colton replied, apparently a little startled by the question. "Why?"

"I have been thinking ever since we got here," Al answered, "that our coming to you as we have, without money or anything else, will add a great deal to your expenses and other troubles. Of course I look forward to repaying you in the future, so far as money can repay such kindness; but that won't

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help just now, and I wish I could find some work to do right away, so that I could earn enough to pay part of the living expenses of Mother and Annie and myself."

Mr. Colton laid his hand affectionately on Al's shoulder.

"My boy," said he, "you are your father's true son. That is just what he would have been thinking of in similar circumstances. I am glad you have spoken of it, Al, for it is just that problem which has been troubling me ever since you and your dear mother and little sister came. You know how thankful I should be if I could provide you all with everything you need and have no question of means enter into the matter."

"Yes, I do know, Uncle Will," said Al, earnestly.

Mr. Colton went on, "I should like to make your poor mother and Annie as comfortable and easy in every way as possible and I should like to have you continue with school until you are ready to take up your chosen profession. But I do not see how I can compass these desires at present, though perhaps I can later. I was just going to suggest that it would

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probably be necessary for you to get employment for a while when you spoke of it. I am more pleased than I can say that you thought of it first, without any suggestion."

"I don't see how any one could fail to understand the situation, sir," answered Al. "Do you suppose I could find a place to-morrow?"

"Quite likely. You can go down town with me in the morning, and during the day we can call on several acquaintances of mine, some one of whom may be able to give you as good a position as you can well fill to begin with."

Accordingly, quite early next morning they started for the business district. Mr. Colton's office was more than two miles from his home and they walked to Fifth Street and there took a horse car down town. The first place at which they called was a large wholesale grocery house whose proprietor, Mr. White, was a personal friend of Mr. Colton. The latter held a brief private interview with him, rapidly relating the circumstances under which the Briscoes had come to St. Louis, and then Al was called in. Mr. White liked him from the first, and

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within half an hour he was hard at work on an upper floor of the big warehouse, assisting one of the shipping clerks in getting down, checking, and sending out orders of goods. Mr. White had informed him that as soon as he was sufficiently familiar with the stock and the method of checking it out, he would himself be promoted to a position as shipping clerk.

Though as time went on and the days lengthened into weeks, Al was obliged to confess to himself that the business possessed few attractions for him, yet he applied himself industriously to mastering its details, feeling not only a sense of satisfaction in the knowledge that he was winning his employer's confidence and approval, but a still deeper pride in the fact that he was becoming able to bear a very material share of the modest living expenses of himself and his mother and sister. Although Mr. White imagined that Al's rapid progress in familiarizing himself with his work was due to a natural aptitude for the business, the fact was that he was simply determined to get ahead and earn as much money as possible. A constant mental un-

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rest, due chiefly to his suspense over Tommy's fate, possessed him, and he tried to soothe it as far as might be by becoming absorbed in his work. Beyond his natural anxiety for his brother, however, though he did not exactly realize it, was the repugnance to obligation, the unquenchable desire to have his mother and sister independent, which was a characteristic inherited from his sturdy father. He very soon qualified himself to take his place as a shipping clerk, thus securing an advance in pay, which enabled him still further to relieve his uncle's unwonted burdens.

Thus the Autumn went by and Mrs. Briscoe began to look impatiently for news from General Sibley, for they had been able to gather something in a fragmentary way from the St. Louis papers of the events which had taken place in Minnesota since they had left there, and they knew that Colonel Sibley had been made a brigadier general of volunteers for his skilful conduct of the Indian campaign. At length one day the long-looked-for letter came. Mr. Colton brought it out from his office, and with palpitating hearts the family gathered

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around Al while he read it aloud; for Mrs. Briscoe was too much agitated to read it. The letter was dated at Fort Snelling and was in General Sibley's own handwriting. It read as follows:

Mrs. Thomas Briscoe, St. Louis, Mo.

My Dear Madam: It is with the deepest regret that I am obliged to inform you that thus far our efforts to recover your young son from his Indian captors have been unsuccessful. Late in September we rescued about two hundred and fifty white prisoners near the Yellow Medicine but he was not among them. We have also captured about two thousand of the Indian miscreants who were prominent in the late outbreak and massacre, and they are now being tried by a court martial. Many of them are being convicted and will be executed. Among them, however, is no individual satisfying the description of the captor of your son Thomas, as given to me by your elder son.

I have, however, received information which leads me to believe that this man is a Yanktonais from the region of the Missouri River, who is known to have been consorting with the Minnesota Indians during the late outrages and who has since fled into Dakota again. Indian prisoners whom I have interviewed claim that he took with him a white boy, who, I have little doubt, is your son. The several prisoners with whom I have conversed all agree that the child appeared to be in good health when they saw him, though I have been able to gather nothing further concerning him.

It is quite possible that his captor may weary of holding your son a prisoner during the coming winter and

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take him into one of the fur-trading posts along the Missouri River. But, in case this should not happen, I may say to you that it is the present intention of the Government to send strong expeditions against the hostile Indians about Devil's Lake and along the Missouri, next summer. I may be in command of one of the columns; but, whether I am or not, I beg to assure you that no efforts will be spared to effect the release of your son and his speedy restoration to you. Nor is it at all probable that such a thorough campaign as is now contemplated will fail of the desired result, for it is the Government's purpose to pursue the Indians relentlessly until their last prisoner is recovered, until the last savage guilty of atrocities against the whites is given up to justice, and until the entire Sioux Nation is brought to submission.

With renewed assurances of my deep sympathy and regret that I have no more satisfactory news for you at the present time, I beg to remain, my dear madam,

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. H. SIBLEY, Brig. Gen., U. S. V.

Mrs. Briscoe broke down completely on hearing this disappointing intelligence and could not be comforted for a long time. But the courageous spirit which had already carried her through so much finally reasserted itself; since there was nothing to do except endure the suspense, she resolved to endure it patiently and not depress the spirits of those around her with her own griefs.

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On his part Al felt at first that he could not bear to spend more time in idle waiting while his brother remained a captive. It seemed to him that he must start out and do something. But reflection showed him that this desire, though natural, was futile. Hard as the conclusion was, it seemed plain that the best thing was to trust General Sibley and the soldiers with the problem, at least for the present and until the results of the next summer's campaign could be known. Had he been old enough to enlist, Al would undoubtedly have joined the army in spite of everything, in order to be at the front and share in the search for his brother. But as he would not be sixteen until the early Spring of 1863, that was out of the question.

Nevertheless, the atmosphere of the place and the time in which he was living were well calculated to develop in him the strong military inclinations of his nature, and as the months went on he found it more and more difficult to be satisfied with the work in which he was engaged. There was hardly an hour of the day in which squads or companies of troops did not pass along the busy streets of St.

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Louis, and often full regiments, with bands playing and colors flying, or batteries of artillery rumbling over the cobble-stones, marched past on their way to the Levee to embark on steamers for the seat of war in the South. St. Louis was the great recruiting depot of the West, and at Benton Barracks, just beyond the Fair Grounds and only a few blocks from the Colton home, as many as twenty thousand men were nearly always quartered, mustering, drilling, outfitting and then marching away to take their places in the fighting armies at the front. News of battle was constantly in the air and the war formed the chief topic of conversation always and everywhere. Now it was the disastrous repulse of the Army of the Potomac at Fredericksburg, Virginia; then the terrible conflict at Murfreesboro, Tennessee; and then, a little later, the capture of Fort Hindman, at Arkansas Post, Arkansas; while authentic news and uncertain rumors of other battles, skirmishes, and military movements circulated constantly.

Though St. Louis was a Union city by a very substantial majority there nevertheless existed there a strong though suppressed Southern sentiment; but

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Al was even less inclined to be influenced by it than his father would have been, or than he would have been himself before his father's death. The reason was that public opinion in the North and West at this time held that the outbreak of the Indians in Minnesota had been instigated and encouraged by agents from the Southern Confederacy, who hoped, by precipitating an Indian war upon the Northwest, not only to divert a good many Union troops from the South but even possibly to effect a Confederate conquest of the Northwestern Territories. Happily for the fair fame of American civilization, it has in later years been quite clearly established that the Confederates had nothing to do with inciting the barbarous outbreak, but at the time it was firmly believed in the Northwest. Therefore it seems but natural that a person in Al's position, grieving for a father murdered and a brother carried away captive by the red fiends, should entertain bitterness toward those whom he believed to be largely responsible for his bereavement. This feeling but added to his interest in the military preparations of those who were going to fight the Southerners, and increased

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his desire to be a partaker in their toils and trials and triumphs.

When he found an opportunity to do so, as he did on Sunday afternoons and his other infrequent holidays, he occasionally went down to the river front where were to be seen the big transport steamers, starting out loaded to the guards with troops or coming in with cargoes of sick and wounded men, and where, also, were generally to be found one or more of the pugnacious-looking iron-clad gunboats which had been and still were fighting their way foot by foot down the battery-lined rivers of the South, carrying the flag of the Union into regions where it had been outcast for two years past. But more frequently his steps turned toward Benton Barracks, for there on the great parade ground between the huge barracks, each seven hundred and fifty feet in length, were always to be found swarms of troops at drill. Here he would see a squad of four or eight recruits receiving from a corporal instructions in the rudiments of tactics, such as the salutes, the facings, or the manual of arms. A little

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further on would be a regiment executing ponderous evolutions in company or battalion front.

Observing all these tactical exercises with lively interest and careful attention, Al soon began to comprehend the methods and objects of movements which at first seemed wholly bewildering. He obtained a copy of the "United States Infantry and Rifle Tactics," the text book then in use for the instruction of the United States troops, and spent evening after evening studying them until he was much more familiar with the contents than the average volunteer soldier several years his senior. Though he could not utilize his knowledge because of his youth, he persisted in acquiring it, not only because he liked it but because he felt that eventually it would be useful to him, especially if he could ever carry out his cherished ambition of entering West Point.

One day in the Spring of 1863, Mr. White called Al into his private office.

"The chief commissary of subsistence in this city has asked me if I could tell him of a few good men

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to act as civilian clerks in his department," said he. "They must be men who understand something of staple groceries such as the army uses and who know how to get out orders and ship goods. Would you like to have such a position for a while?"

Al's eyes brightened. Such work would place him in closer touch with the army, an object which appealed to him strongly. But he bore in mind his obligations and answered, cautiously,

"I should like it very much, Mr. White, if you approve of it and if I could make as much as I do now."

"The position will pay you a little more than you are getting now," said Mr. White, leaning back in his chair as if to give plenty of time to the discussion, "and it will give you some valuable experience if you aim to continue in the wholesale grocery business. The commissary department is handling enormous quantities of goods in St. Louis now and an insight into the Government's methods of transacting such a volume of business will be a great benefit to you. Of course, whenever you want to leave the Government's employ and come back here, your position will be open for you. You are very young for such

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a place but you have made such rapid progress and learned to do your work so well and thoroughly that I shall have no hesitation in recommending you as one of my best employees."

"Thank you, sir," said Al, flushing with pleasure. "I hope I deserve it."

"You understand," Mr. White continued, "I don't want you to leave me; but I owe it to the Union to give her the best I have when she asks it. I am past middle age myself and I don't think I am worth enough as a soldier to volunteer yet; there are plenty of younger and stronger men still pouring in to fill up the armies. But if the war drags on and the time comes that I feel she needs my actual, physical services, I shall go. Meantime, as I say, I shall give her the best I have in other ways, and you are part of that best. Though you are not old enough to be a soldier, I know you will appreciate that your work as a civilian employee may be quite as valuable to the Government as though you were enlisted in the service."

"Indeed I do, Mr. White," answered Al, "and I shall do my best to serve the Union faithfully."

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In the new work upon which he entered next day Al continued throughout that momentous Summer and Fall. Though serving in a capacity both humble and obscure, he had his part in preparing and forwarding the supplies which enabled General Grant to cut loose from his base, swing his army around to the rear of Vicksburg, and two months later to capture that Gibraltar of the Mississippi with all its garrison and munitions of war. He helped to make ready the subsistence carried by Grant's and Sherman's armies when they went to the relief of Chattanooga; and from the depots where he worked a constant stream of stores was always going forward to the thousands of Union troops scattered in fortified posts and encampments or marching hither and thither all over the Southwest fighting innumerable minor battles and skirmishes. But his daily occupation was very prosaic and needs no more than casual mention.

At length, when Autumn came again, another letter was received from General Sibley. It was as disappointing as the one of the year before. He told briefly of the long Summer's campaign in

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which he had marched westward from the Minnesota River to the Missouri, defeating the Indians in three pitched battles and driving them across the Missouri, and of the later advance of another column up the valley of the Missouri, under General Alfred Sully, which had also encountered and defeated the Indians. But neither column had rescued Tommy, though they had heard rumors of his whereabouts and had gained a little new information concerning his captor.

The latter, it now seemed clearly established, was an Upper Yanktonais warrior named Te-o-kun-ko, or, in English, The Swift. From the statements of hostile Indians who had talked with friendlies or had surrendered to the troops during the campaign, it appeared that this man had not been with the main body of the Indians during the Summer; he had taken his family, in company with a small party of about a dozen other lodges, over into the country along the Yellowstone and Powder Rivers, in Idaho. They had probably spent the season in hunting and skirmishing occasionally with the Crows, the powerful people occupying most of that

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region, who were hereditary enemies of the Sioux. It must be understood that the great Sioux Nation consists of a number of different tribes, of which the Upper Yanktonais tribe is one, and the Lower Yanktonais another. It seemed that he still had with him the white boy whom he had captured in Minnesota. The lad seemed perfectly contented and was displaying such aptitude and prowess in learning to ride, shoot, hunt, and perform the other feats of skill, agility, and hardihood which the Indians regard as most manly, that Te-o-kun-ko took great pride and delight in him and was evidently trying to wean him away from any longing for his white relatives, in the hope of eventually making him, to all practical intents, a full-fledged Sioux warrior.

General Sibley added that in the Spring of 1864 General Sully would almost certainly lead another expedition up the Missouri to fight the Indians, though whether he himself would move against them again was doubtful. He renewed his regrets that he had been unable to recapture Tommy, and his hopes that another year would surely see him restored to his family, and here the letter ended.

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Mrs. Briscoe and Al were not only bitterly disappointed by the news; it positively stunned them. The idea that Tommy could have been, all this time, anything but a suffering and wretchedly unhappy prisoner, was entirely new to them. That he could have grown not merely contented with his lot among the savages but even attached to it, a possibility very clearly suggested by General Sibley's letter, seemed unbelievable, at least to Mrs. Briscoe. But Al, on reflection, was not so much inclined to scoff at it as he had been at first. He remembered having heard of several cases in which white boys, taken captive by Indians when so young that their affections and habits were not deeply rooted, had become so attached to the wild, free life of the red men that they voluntarily renounced civilization and remained all their lives with the people of their adoption. Then he recalled the prominent characteristics of Tommy's disposition,— his sturdy independence, his love for being out of doors, for handling horses and for hunting and trapping,— inclinations which he had not shown until their removal to Minnesota but which

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had developed rapidly there, where Tommy, in the midst of a solitude which was almost wilderness, had apparently been happier than ever before in his life. He recalled, also, the little boy's warm-hearted affection for his parents and for himself and Annie; a trait of character which certainly seemed the strongest argument against the theory that Tommy could grow to forget them. But Al was obliged to admit to himself that the other impulses of his young brother's nature would all find gratification in the life of the plains; while, moreover, if he were kindly treated, even his affections might be kindled for the people with whom he was living. He had been with the Indians now for more than a year, which is a long time in a young boy's life.

The more he became convinced of such possibilities, the more was Al disturbed and alarmed by them. It had been bad enough to think of his brother as a heart-broken captive, but to think of him as perhaps a future renegade, an apostate to his race, was far worse, for it added shame to sorrow. He could not bear to think of his mother having to face such a calamity. Finally he took his

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troubled thoughts to his uncle, who was always kind, sympathetic and helpful.

"I have been thinking a great deal about this matter, too, Al," said Mr. Colton. "There is no question in my mind that Tommy might take the course you speak of, if he should remain long enough with the Indians. From the reports we have he seems to be well and even happy. The most important reason now for getting him away from them seems to be to remove him from their moral influence. But, incredible as it may seem, I really believe there may be a possibility that now, even if the soldiers should find him, he would be unwilling to come away with them."

Al looked at his uncle and slowly nodded his head in agreement.

"Yes, I believe that might be so," he answered. "And it seems to me, Uncle Will, for that very reason if no other, I ought to go with the next expedition; for if Tommy should be found I know that when he saw me and I told him about mother and all of us, he would want to come back. But I can't go, that 's all."

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"Al," said Mr. Colton, "I agree with you that you ought to, and I think probably you can. Since midsummer my business has begun to revive. People are commencing to see that the South is getting the worst of this war and there is a growing feeling of confidence that the Union is going to be saved. Therefore interest is reviving in business matters of all kinds, real estate among others. If the Union is going to be preserved, St. Louis will continue to be a great and growing city; nobody cared to speculate on what it would be while the success of the Confederacy seemed probable. But, you see, I am beginning to have business again, and if our armies continue gaining such victories as they have been during the last six months, there will be more business by next Spring. I wish to Heaven I could go into the service and help to hasten the end; but this," he moved the stump of his left arm impatiently, "forever debars me from such service. But if I can help you to go where you may be able to assist in recovering your brother and at the same time to be perhaps of some service to our country, even though you are not old enough to enlist, I shall feel

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that I have done something. I think by Spring I shall be able to take care of your mother and sister while you are gone and I shall be only too glad to do it."

Al's cheeks flushed with mingled surprise and pleasure. His sense of duty, however, was still uppermost.

"But, Uncle Will,—" he began.

"Now, that 's all right, Al," interrupted Mr. Colton. "This is simply a family matter, and you need not worry about it at all. The only question which remains to be settled is whether it can be arranged for you to accompany an expedition into the Indian country. If General Sibley were going, no doubt he would be willing to find a place for you some way. But it seems that he may not go again, and another commander, like General Sully, for instance, may not want to have you. However, we shall have to wait to settle that until we know more about actual plans for next season's campaign, and that probably will not be possible until late Winter or early Spring."

Mrs. Briscoe at first found it very hard to recon-

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cile herself to the plan, for she was divided between anxiety for Tommy and apprehension lest harm should befall Al if he went in search of his brother. But by pointing out to her that it was still uncertain whether the commander of the expedition would permit him to go at all, Al, shrewdly aided by his uncle, induced her to give the subject calm consideration, being convinced that if she did so she would in time see that it was best. So the Winter passed with little further discussion of the subject. Al continued at his work, Annie was attending school, and Mrs. Briscoe aided her sister with the duties of the household. Indeed, the refugees from Minnesota seemed to have become fixtures in the Colton home, and, though all of them thought occasionally of their returning some time to the abandoned claim above Fort Ridgely, the time for doing so remained in the indefinite future. None of them could feel like attempting to resume the even tenor of their lives until Tommy should have been brought back from his captivity.

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CHAPTER VI

ON GENERAL SULLY'S STAFF

AT last, early in March, the long uncertainty respecting the next season's campaign against the Sioux, and the rumors which had circulated about it all through the Winter, were terminated by the arrival in St. Louis of General Alfred Sully, who, so the papers announced, had come to begin the accumulation of supplies and to make other preparations for his impending campaign. Brigadier General Sully was the commander of the District of Iowa, with headquarters at Davenport, in that State; but he had come to St. Louis directly from Milwaukee. There he had spent several days in consultation with General Sibley and Major General John Pope, who was in command of the Department of the Northwest, embracing the Districts of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota, the latter under General Sibley.

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General Sully very soon made his presence known at the commissary office in St. Louis by the requisitions for supplies which began to pour in from him. A few days later a young army officer, an *aide-de-camp* on General Sully's staff, was sent down to the office by the General to check over the requisitions already made. Al was assigned to assist him. The aide, whose name was Lieutenant Dale, proved an agreeable youth, only a few years older than Al, and after their work was finished they fell into conversation. Al told him briefly of the disasters which had befallen his family in Minnesota, and then of the battle at Fort Ridgely.

"Why, you 've seen enough fighting to be a veteran already," exclaimed Lieutenant Dale, when Al had concluded his narrative. "I 'll tell you what you ought to do; you ought to go up into the Sioux country with us this summer. We 're going to have some fun up there. And maybe you could get on the track of your brother."

"That is just what I want to do," answered Al, "but I 'm not old enough to enlist."

"That makes no difference," answered Dale.

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"The General could arrange to take you in some capacity or other if he knows that you have a good reason for wanting to go and that you won't lose your nerve in a pinch."

"Do you think he would?" asked Al, doubtfully.

"I think it 's very probable. Go and ask him. He is very kind-hearted, if he is a strict disciplinarian and a hard fighter."

"He's a hard fighter, is he?" asked Al, eagerly. "You see, I don't know much about him."

Lieutenant Dale looked at him pityingly. "A hard fighter?" he replied. "I should say he is! He fought against the Seminoles in Florida and the Rogue River Indians in Oregon and the Sioux in Minnesota and Nebraska and the Cheyennes in Kansas, all before the beginning of the Rebellion. He won honors at Fair Oaks and Chancellorsville; and then, when the Indian trouble in the Northwest came, they sent him up into Dakota to fight the Sioux again, last Summer. That was the first that I was with him, and we certainly had our share of marching, going up the Missouri Valley, and our share of fighting at White Stone Hill, where we swung away-

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from the Missouri and struck the redskins out on the prairie nearly over to the James River. They had been following up General Sibley, never suspecting that we would come from the other direction and fall on their rear. But we 'll punish them worse this year, for we shall have a much larger force; and the General intends to follow them until they are either forced to make peace or are broken up and scattered all over the country. And he can scatter them; what he does n't know about Indian fighting is n't worth knowing."

"I 'm sure it will be a campaign well worth taking part in," replied Al. "I ought to go, and I hope I can."

"I will speak to the General about you and the reason you have for wanting to accompany us," Lieutenant Dale said. "Then you come and see him yourself to-morrow or as soon after as you can."

Al did not delay the visit. That evening he talked with his mother and uncle about it and, though the former was naturally reluctant to have him go where she felt he would be in danger, she had also come to

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realize that the arrangement afforded the best chance of recovering her lost son, Tommy. Mr. Colton, after Al had told him of his conversation with young Lieutenant Dale, concluded that it would be as well for Al to interview General Sully alone.

"I do not know the General," said he, "and I could influence him but little; while, if you go by yourself, it will indicate more self-reliance on your part. I know, of course, that you have plenty of it, but a stranger naturally would not until he had become acquainted with you, and it is always well to make a good first impression. I think you were fortunate in meeting this Lieutenant Dale. He will probably speak favorably of you to General Sully, and that will help your case."

Accordingly the next afternoon when his work for the day was finished, Al hurried off to the place where General Sully was making his headquarters while in the city. He found little evidence of pomp or ceremony about these headquarters. An orderly was in the outer room, to whom Al told his name and errand. The soldier replied that the General was alone, writing letters; and then, step-

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ping to the door of an adjoining room, he announced Al by name.

"Bring him in," Al heard a deep but pleasant voice answer, and the next moment he found himself standing, with a somewhat fluttered pulse, in the presence of General Sully. The latter rose as he entered and extended his hand.

"I have been expecting you, young man," said he, smiling. "Lieutenant Dale told me of you last evening, and I had also heard of you before from General Sibley. I was on the watch for your brother all last Summer but I could n't get hold of him. Have a chair," he went on, resuming his own seat and motioning Al to another one. "Now, what can I do for you?"

As clearly and briefly as possible Al related his reasons for thinking that he ought to go into the Indian country to assist in the search for his brother, finishing with the request that he might be taken along in some capacity and adding that he would try to make himself useful. As he talked, he was conscious that the General was studying him critically through the pair of deep-set eyes

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which, though penetrating, were not forbidding. When he had concluded, the General did not reply at once. Instead, he remarked, after a pause,

"General Sibley told me he understood that your father was one of Doniphan's men. Is that correct?"

Unconsciously Al's shoulders straightened a little.

"Yes, sir," he replied, a touch of pride in his voice, "he was. I am named for Colonel Doniphan, — Alexander Doniphan Briscoe."

"Indeed?" said the General, with evident surprise and interest.

He was silent a moment, then asked abruptly,

"Do you know anything about tactics,— military routine,— discipline?"

"I have been a clerk in the commissary department here for a year, sir," Al replied, "and have become pretty familiar with the Government's methods of handling stores and more or less so with other matters of administration. Then I have studied tactics pretty hard, both in the book and in watching the troops at drill out at Benton Barracks."

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"H-m! That 's good." The General's voice became decisive. "If you should go with me you would have to become a part of the expedition and submit to discipline the same as a soldier, even though you are not enlisted; and I understand you are too young to enlist. I can have no favored idlers around. We are going after the Indians and for no other purpose, and in order to be successful every individual must do his part. Do you think you could agree to do that?"

"I shall certainly obey orders and try to make myself useful," responded Al, promptly.

General Sully swung around in his swivel desk chair and gazed abstractedly out of the window for a moment. Then he swung back again and looked at Al frankly.

"I may as well tell you," said he, "that it is against my policy to have any more civilians with me in the field than I can possibly help. Too many civilians mixed up in military affairs have nearly been the ruination of the United States during this Rebellion. At the same time, I like to have young fellows of the right metal; they are often more use-

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ful than old stagers. And I believe you 'll do. A son of one of Doniphan's daredevils, especially a namesake of his, ought to be all right for courage; and moreover, General Sibley told me of the reports he heard of your conduct at Fort Ridgely. You see, I know more about you than you thought." He smiled at Al's embarrassed glance. "I 'll find a place for you somewhere, as a commissary's or quartermaster's clerk, probably. Come and see me again to-morrow or next day and I 'll have it arranged."

Al thanked him heartily and went away, feeling already a warm admiration for this firm but courteous soldier. The interview aroused in him more pleasurable anticipation of the expedition than he had felt heretofore, and he found himself preparing for it and looking forward to it enthusiastically.

True to his promise, General Sully had a position arranged for him when he called next day, and one, moreover, upon whose duties he could enter at once. He quitted his work as clerk of the St. Louis commissary office only to continue it in the same place as a clerk for the chief commissary officer of

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the Northwestern Indian Expedition. Knowing that he was to be with them, General Sully's staff officers took an immediate interest in him, especially Lieutenant Dale, whose friendship proved not only increasingly pleasant but very helpful as well. Dale was able to give Al many suggestions as to how best to meet the problems and situations which constantly arose in his position. There was also a Captain Feilner, who treated him with much kindness. He was an officer of German birth who had risen to his position from the ranks of the regular army and was now General Sully's chief topographical engineer.

For six weeks every one in St. Louis connected with the expedition was busily occupied in getting supplies together and in shipping several hundred tons of foodstuffs, clothing, camp equipage, and ammunition on steamboats which were going up the Missouri on the Spring high water to Fort Benton, Montana, the outfitting point for the newly discovered gold district in that Territory. These goods were consigned to Fort Union, the chief trading post of the American Fur Company, at the

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mouth of the Yellowstone River, where a depot was to be established so as to have supplies ready for the troops when they should reach that point, as it was planned they should do, after marching overland from the Missouri to the Yellowstone. Many hundreds of tons more were loaded on the eight steamers which General Sully had chartered for the exclusive use of his army, and on them were carried also a great quantity of building materials for use in the two forts which were to be erected, one on the upper Missouri and one on the Yellowstone. Few troops were to start with the fleet from St. Louis, because General Sully's men were either scattered in the several forts and cantonments along the river in Dakota where they had spent the Winter, or were to meet the boats at the village of Sioux City, Iowa; while a large column from General Sibley's command was marching from Minnesota straight across the high prairies of Dakota to join the rest of the expedition at Bois Cache Creek, nearly opposite the mouth of the Moreau River.

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CHAPTER VII

UP THE MISSOURI

ON the last day of April the long preparations were finally completed. The eight steamers lay along the Levee with flags floating from their forward peaks and the black smoke pouring from their funnels. A great crowd had gathered on the river bank to watch the departure; and while drays and wagons rattled over the cobblestones and long lines of negro roustabouts ran back and forth across the gang-planks of the steamers, carrying on board the last packages of freight, Al stood at the boiler deck rail of the *Island City*, General Sully's headquarters boat. He waved his hand and smiled, more cheerfully than he felt at that moment, to his mother and Annie and Uncle Will, who stood in the wide doorway of the wharf-boat below, looking up at him. Now that the final moment had come, Mrs. Briscoe's heart was torn at parting with her boy, who had so

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loyally and unselfishly devoted himself to her well-being since her husband's death. But she bore it as bravely as a good mother always bears such trials, smiling brightly at him through her tears as the head-lines were slipped from the *Island City's* bow and her great stern wheel began slowly to revolve. Al, his own eyes misty, watched his mother until in the distance she became blurred with the crowd. The steamer swung gracefully out into the swift current of the Mississippi, described a wide, sweeping curve to the middle of the channel, and then, rounding up stream at the head of the majestic line of her consorts, forged up past the smoky city on the first mile of the long journey into the Northwestern wilderness.

Until the cheering crowd on the Levee was quite blotted out by distance and intervening steamers along the bank, Al stood at the rail looking back. When at last he turned away, with a strange feeling of depression and loneliness, he found Lieutenant Dale standing behind him.

"Come, boy," said he, slapping Al's shoulder, "brace up! We are going to have a great time

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this Summer, and you 'll be mighty glad you came. I know it 's hard leaving your folks. I felt just the same way less than three years ago when I marched off from home to Washington and the first Bull Run. But it does no good to feel blue over it; you 'll come back again all right, anyway. Get busy; that 's the best remedy for blues. Are those last goods that were brought on board checked up yet? No? Well, you better go down and check them, had n't you?"

Al acted on the suggestion, and by the time he was through, the fleet had entered the mouth of the Missouri and was approaching St. Charles, a picturesque little old city straggling up over the rugged, wooded hills on the north bank of the Missouri. The boats did not stop at the town, but continued running until nearly dark, when they laid up for the night at Penn's Woodyard, four miles above. Excepting in high water, when the channel is broad and deep, it is very unusual for boats to run at night on the Missouri owing to the danger of striking snags or going aground on sandbars. Next morning, after replenishing their fuel supply

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at the woodyard, they started at daylight and ran without mishap or halt, excepting to take on wood several times, until dusk found them just below the mouth of the Gasconade River, where they again tied up to wait for daylight.

In the Spring of 1864 there had been little rain in the Missouri Valley, and the river was very low for the season, a fact which greatly disturbed General Sully; he foresaw that the trip would probably be painfully slow and that he would not be able to reach the Indian country until so late that the campaign would have to be a hurried one. Early next morning, at the mouth of the Gasconade, they encountered the first of the obstacles which they had been dreading. As is usual below the mouths of tributaries, where the eddy created by the muddy current of the main river coming in contact with that of the tributary causes the mud and sand to sink to the bottom, a sandbar here extended across the Missouri's channel. The *Island City,* in the lead and running near the south shore along the base of the bluffs, notwithstanding the caution of her pilot, stuck her bow into it and stopped short.

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Al, who was in the main cabin, ran forward as he felt the boat shiver and careen and looked down over the bow.

"Why, we 've stuck fast!" he exclaimed to Captain Feilner, whom he found standing by the rail. "What will they do now?"

"Send out a boat and sound for a passage," the Captain answered.

Even as he spoke, Alexander Lamont,— or, Alex Lamont, as he was usually called,— the tall, bronzed captain of the *Island City*, leaned out over the rail and shouted up to the hurricane deck above,

"Lower away the yawl, there! Step lively, now!"

They heard the shuffle of feet on the sanded tar roof overhead, the creak of falls and tackles, and in a moment the boat, its long oars manned by six stalwart deck hands and carrying, besides, a steersman at the stern and a leadsman with a sounding pole at the bow, pulled around the side of the steamer and out into the shoal water ahead. Meanwhile, the long line of steamers behind them also came to a stop.

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"How much water must there be for us to get through?" asked Al.

"We are drawing three and a half feet," answered Captain Feilner, "and we ought to have four feet to go on, but we can do it on three and a half by sparring or warping. Have you never seen those things done? Well, you will probably have a chance in a few minutes,— and plenty more before we are through with this trip. Some of the other steamers do not draw quite as much as we do but none of them seem to be going to try to pass us."

The yawl gradually worked its way diagonally across and down the river, following the crest of the bar, until it had approached quite near to the north bank, the leadsman constantly thrusting his pole down to the river bottom. Then the boat suddenly turned around and came rapidly back to the *Island City*.

"There 's three and a half, large, over there," said the pilot who had acted as leadsman as he came aboard, speaking to Captain Lamont. "We can go over but you 'll likely have to set spars."

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He ascended to the pilot-house and jerked the whistle rope. A warning bellow roared out over the river, re-echoing from the forest-clad bluffs on either side. One by one the steamboats behind them took up the refrain, until the noise resembled that of a manufacturing city at the noon hour.

"What on earth is all that whistling for?" asked Al. "Are they trying to scare the bar out of the river?"

"No," laughed Captain Feilner. "That is a signal that we are going to back up. There is n't room to turn in this channel and all the others must back up, too, so that we won't run into each other."

The fleet backed for a half mile, then the *Island City* reversed her wheel and started up again, running this time, however, close in by the north shore. As she went ahead the strokes of her pistons became more and more rapid until, as she approached the crossing, she was going at a great speed for a steamboat.

"He 's going to try to belt her through," ex-

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claimed Lieutenant Dale, coming up at this moment. "We 'll get a jolt. I hope nothing breaks."

Hardly had he finished speaking when there came a loud grating sound from the bow as the boat's flat bottom began to scrape over the sand. Her timbers quivered and groaned, her speed diminished so quickly that those who were standing on her decks were nearly thrown down, and then, after scraping along for a few feet slowly and painfully she came to a full stop. For a moment the stern wheel continued to churn the water into white foam; then the pilot, with an impatient gesture, jerked the wire to the stopping-bell down in the engine room, and the ponderous wheel came to a halt.

"No use," he cried to Captain Lamont, leaning out of the pilot-house window. "She 's nearly over but you 'll have to set the spars!"

There was a great shouting and commotion on the lower deck as the spars, two long, heavy timbers like telegraph poles, one on each side of the bow, were swung out and erected in position, their lower extremities resting on the river bottom, the upper,

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fitted with tackle blocks, rising high above the level of the boat's top deck. Through the tackle blocks ran heavy cables fastened at one end to the boat's gunwale and at the other to the steam capstan. When the spars had been set, the capstan began to revolve, winding up the cable and thus hoisting the bow of the boat until it hung suspended on the spars. At the same time the wheel was slowly revolved, forcing the boat ahead until the spars had tilted forward so far as to let the bow down again into the sand. Then they were dragged forward and set upright once more, and the process was repeated. Before a great while the crest of the bar was passed, and the *Island City* floated on into deeper water and continued her journey. But though it had not been what river men would consider a hard crossing, she had lost nearly six hours in sounding and sparring, and it was noon by the time she had left the Gasconade out of sight behind her. The vessels following her each forced its way across the bar in the same manner as she had done, excepting the *Chippewa Falls* and the *Alone,* boats of smaller dimensions and lighter draft, which were able to

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slip over without sparring. By the time the last one had passed the Gasconade, it was evening again, and the fleet was strung out for miles up the river. The *Island City* anchored out for the night to a bar just below Kate Howard Chute, so called for a beautiful packet of that name which had sunk there in 1859. The point was only thirty miles above the Gasconade, so that twenty-four hours had been consumed in covering that insignificant distance. The *Island City* was towing a large barge, intended for use when they should reach the Indian country, but it was very much in the way and retarded her progress considerably.

That evening Al asked Captain Lamont how far it was from St. Louis to the mouth of Cannonball River, Dakota, where it was expected that the actual campaign against the Indians would begin, and was told that it was about fourteen hundred miles. He did some figuring and found that if they continued to progress at the same rate as they had done that day it would be more than six weeks, or past the middle of June, before they would reach their destination. It seemed an astonishingly long

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time to him but, as the event proved, he had considerably overestimated the average speed which the fleet could maintain. For days they continued travelling through the State of Missouri, contending with sandbars and head winds. The interior of the State was in a deplorable condition as a result of the war. Guerillas were overrunning it everywhere, and the boats rarely landed at a town without hearing either that some of the marauders had just left on the approach of the fleet or that they had been raiding there a day or two before. General Sully's vessels were so numerous and well armed that the guerillas did not dare attack them. All Missouri River boats at that time were more or less fortified around the pilot-house with timber or boiler-iron bulwarks, to protect the pilots from the bullets of guerillas on the lower river and from those of Indians in the upper country, while the piles of cordwood on the main deck afforded some protection to the men there. Yet the fleet seldom passed a downward-bound boat which had not been fired into or boarded, and fortunate was the vessel

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which had escaped without the loss of one or more people on board killed or wounded.

There were plenty of men in the expedition who would have been glad to encourage such attacks had they been made, for, as was always the case among the class of men who worked as laborers on the steamboats, there were many hardened and even desperate characters in the crews of Sully's vessels. Not a few of them were deserters from the Confederate army, tired of fighting but still rebels at heart; and others were Southern sympathizers, fleeing from the draft in the Northern States. Most of these men hoped, when they should draw near to Montana, to find opportunities for slipping away from the expedition and making their way to the gold fields which were just being opened in the placer deposits around Bannack, Last Chance Gulch, Alder Gulch and other places, and which were attracting a wild rush of adventurers from all over the country. Such men were naturally hard to handle and it took steamboat officers of firmness and courage to keep them in control.

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Since the beginning of the voyage Al had not had much occasion to mingle with the crew of the *Island City*. The cargo of the steamboat consisted chiefly of corn for the use of the cavalry horses in the Indian country and, once it was on board, required little attention. He therefore seldom had any reason for going to the lower deck except to while away the time, which, indeed, was the principal occupation of the army officers on board. As might naturally be supposed, he was usually with some of them. But one day he was standing on the main deck near the boilers when one of the deck hands, a young fellow a few years older than himself, came by carrying a couple of heavy sticks of cordwood to the furnaces. Al had once or twice in the past noticed this fellow staring at him in a disagreeable way and felt instinctively that it must be because the deck hand was envious of the apparently easy and pleasant time which he was having. Al's back was turned toward him and neither saw the other until one of the sticks collided heavily with Al's shoulder, almost throwing him down. Al turned and though bruised, was on the point of

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apologizing for being in the way, when the fellow, an ugly, red flush overspreading his face, shouted, with a plentiful sprinkling of oaths between his words,

"Get out of my road, you little Yankee snipe! What are you loafing around here for, anyhow?"

"I 'm sorry I got in your way," replied Al, controlling his temper, "but I did n't see you."

"Well, you 'd better stay upstairs with your blue-bellied Yankee officers. They ought n't to let their little pet run around this way."

Hearing loud words, several other deck hands gathered round, grinning at the excitement, their sympathies evidently with their companion.

"As for my being down here," Al answered, feeling that it would not do to let such language pass unnoticed, especially before the other men, "I have as much business here as you have. As for being a Yankee, I suppose everybody on a United States ship is a Yankee. If they 're not, they 'd better go ashore."

"It would take a mighty big lot of such spindle-legged doll babies as you to put me ashore," shouted

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the young ruffian, flinging down his wood and advancing on Al with clenched fists. "Down South we don't use anything but boats we 've kicked the Yankees off of."

Several of the other deck hands crowded closer, exclaiming,

"Aw, let the kid alone, Jimmy. He ain't done nothin' to you."

"Look out, Jimmy; you 'll get in trouble, talkin' that way."

"So you 're a rebel deserter, are you?" asked Al, his eyes flashing. "I thought so. If you 're so much attached to them, why did n't you stay down there and take some more Yankee boats?"

The fellow, quite beside himself with rage, did not wait to reply but sprang at Al like a bull-dog. Al knew little about boxing, but he was quick. As his assailant rushed at him, he jumped forward and planted one fist with all his strength on the point of the fellow's chin. The rowdy's feet flew from under him and he fell to the deck with a heavy thud, completely dazed for a moment. Then he scrambled to his feet with a string of imprecations pouring from

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his lips, and jerking an ugly, broad-bladed knife from a sheath on his belt, again leaped at Al. Seeing his intention, his companions rushed forward to stop him, but Al had snatched up a stoking iron from the floor beside him and swung it back over his shoulder. His face was pale, but not with fright, and as his assailant looked into his steady eyes something in them caused him suddenly to lower his knife and hesitate.

"Come one step nearer and I 'll brain you," said Al, his voice very low and quiet. "You miserable, cowardly bully, attacking a fellow who is unarmed and who has done nothing to you. Now, if you want to stay on this boat you 've got to quit that kind of talk about Yankees or I 'll see that you are put off. It 's very plain you are a rebel and you 've no business getting your living under the protection of the Union as long as you feel that way. Next time you want to try anything with me I shall be ready for you, and I warn you, you won't get off so easily again."

He threw down the stoking iron and, turning his back on the crest-fallen rowdy, deliberately walked

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away, followed by ejaculations from the group of onlookers such as,

"Bully boy!" "Served him right." "You 're all right, kid!"

Later in the day he mentioned the occurrence to Lieutenant Dale and Captain Feilner, who promptly wished to have the deck hand put ashore.

"Not on my account, unless he does some more secesh talking," said Al. "I can take care of myself with him. Besides, it may be a good lesson for him and teach him to be decent after this."

The fellow, as it turned out, had been pretty thoroughly beaten and he made no more trouble for Al during the voyage, though he always gave him an ugly look when they chanced to meet.

Lieutenant Dale decided from the incident that Al ought to learn the art of boxing, in which he himself was quite expert, having learned it in college. So thereafter they spent an hour or so every day in sparring. By the time the voyage was over, Al had become as skilful as his instructor, and General Sully, Captain Feilner and the other officers often

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gathered to watch their bouts and to encourage them to greater efforts.

At Glasgow, his old home, Al had an opportunity to go ashore for a short time and he was astonished and grieved to note the changes which three short years had wrought in the familiar old town. The levee was deserted save by a few indolent loafers who, without recognizing him, stared at him suspiciously as he went past; for in that terror-haunted country, fear and suspicion of everybody and everything had become the habit of the people. Climbing the hill to the main part of town, he found grass growing in the once bustling business streets and many buildings locked and vacant. His father's old store was among them, closed as he had left it. He saw no familiar faces; most of the men and boys he had known were off in one of the armies, Confederate or Union, and the women were not often venturing from their houses in such times. In the residence section the scene was still worse. House after house stood deserted and going to decay. With slow steps Al went on to the place which had

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been the home of his family in the dear old days when they were happy and prosperous. The gate was fallen from the hinges, weeds were growing thickly over the gravel walks, several panes of glass were broken out of the windows, and a loose shutter creaked dolefully in the wind. He rested his hand on a weather-beaten fence picket and gazed out into the garden he remembered so well, where he and Tommy and Annie had played; and beyond that into the orchard, where the summer apples used to grow so large and red and juicy. The cords of his throat tightened and a mist swam before his eyes. Weeds and grass and broken limbs strewed the ground; silence and desolation were everywhere. He turned away abruptly and hastened back to the levee, never stopping until he was once more on the boiler deck of the *Island City,* where General Sully and several other officers were smoking and playing cards. It seemed to him as if a ghost were following him, the ghost of dead days, so tenderly remembered that the thought of them was unendurable, and for the time being he wanted only to plunge into the present and forget.

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CHAPTER VIII

PRAIRIE MARCHING

IT would take a volume to recount all the interesting experiences which befell Al and his companions on the long trip to Fort Sully, Dakota, where the greater part of General Sully's troops had wintered; but, as they contributed nothing of moment to the narrative which we are following, they must be passed by. The fleet reached Kansas City, then a small but rapidly growing frontier town, nearly three weeks after leaving St. Louis, a journey which is now accomplished by rail in seven or eight hours. At Omaha the *Island City* left the barge which had been dragging at her stern all the way from St. Louis, as it was such an impediment that she could no longer handle it in the extremely low stage of the water. On May 30 the fleet reached Sioux City, where some troops were taken on board, as were still more at Fort Randall, twelve days later.

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About June 20 they arrived at Fort Sully and here the long steamboat journey came to an end so far as the General and his staff were concerned, as here they left the boat to march with the column of troops up the eastern side of the Missouri. Though he expected to see them frequently again during the Summer, Al regretted leaving the officers and pilots of the *Island City,* especially Captain Lamont, to whom he had become quite attached. After his encounter with the deck hand, Jim, the Captain had shown a liking for him and during many idle hours had done much toward initiating him into the fascinating mysteries of steamboating. The fleet itself was going on up the river with the cargoes, keeping as nearly as possible abreast of the column.

It was a great relief to be on shore again and able to ride a galloping horse and to move about freely, after the long confinement to the narrow limits of the boat. For two or three days after the arrival of the fleet, Fort Sully presented a very animated appearance. Here were assembled about half of the troops which were to make up the expedition into the hostile country: the Sixth Iowa Cavalry under

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Colonel Pollock; three companies of the Seventh Iowa Cavalry under Lieutenant-Colonel Pattee; Brackett's Battalion of Minnesota Cavalry under Major Brackett, which had marched overland from Fort Snelling to Sioux City and thence to Fort Sully; and two companies of Dakota Cavalry under Captain Miner.

All these soldiers, over one thousand in number, constituting the First Brigade of General Sully's army, were quartered in the barracks of the fort or encamped close around the stockade. The buildings of the fort, which were similar to most of those built on the Northwestern frontier, were of large, unhewn cottonwood logs; and the stockade, about two hundred and seventy feet square, was made of cedar pickets rising twelve feet above the ground, loopholed for musketry and flanked by two bastions, one on the northeastern and one on the southwestern corner, containing cannon to sweep the faces of the stockade. It had been built by General Sully's troops, many of whom were still there, at the close of the campaign in 1863. A short distance out from the fort were several hundred lodges of Indians, re-

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cently hostile, but who, wearying of the struggle, had come in to tender their submission to General Sully. Al, through interpreters, made eager inquiry among them for news of Tommy, but could learn nothing. The Indians, who were of several different tribes of the Sioux Nation: Yanktonais, Brules, Two Kettles, Minneconjoux, Sans Arcs, Uncpapas, and also Blackfeet, reported that the hostiles were gathered in one immense camp of some eighteen hundred lodges, or about six thousand warriors, three days' march west of the Missouri on the headwaters of Heart River, and that they were eager for a fight.

After a few days spent at the fort in organizing and refitting the troops, shoeing the horses and mules, repairing harness, and loading supplies for immediate use into the train of nearly one hundred wagons which was to accompany the column, the latter moved out on its northward march on the twenty-third of June.

Now began days which were full of novel experiences for Al. Though he had to spend a good deal of time with the wagon train, aiding Lieutenant Ba-

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con, the acting assistant quartermaster, in issuing and caring for the supplies, he found many hours each day to ride at the head of the column with the General and his staff, who usually marched there. The weather was generally warm, and the vast, seemingly boundless prairie was parched with drought. The new grass was sparse and dry and hidden under the dead, brown bunches of last year's blue joint and buffalo grass, so that the troops and wagon train usually marched in a cloud of dust which, rising from the feet of the hundreds of trampling animals, was visible for many miles through the clear air of that high plateau country. They knew that Indian scouts were all about them, closely observing their progress, but the red men seldom showed themselves, and one unfamiliar with their ways might easily have believed that there were no enemies near. Game, such as buffalo and antelope, could often be seen in the distance and it was a sore temptation to many of the men to see them and not give pursuit. Indeed, sometimes a party would sally out after a buffalo; but unless the party was strong, it was always against the advice of the old cam-

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paigners, especially the officers and men of the Dakota Cavalry, who had been hunting and fighting Indians all over the southern part of their vast territory ever since the Summer of 1862. These men, recruited among the fearless and adventurous pioneers who had first settled in Dakota a few years before, had been dubbed "the Coyotes" by their companions in arms because of the speed and skill with which they could march and manœuvre against their wily foes; and it was from them that South Dakota in later years derived its familiar nickname, "the Coyote State."

General Sully had such confidence in the Coyotes that he treated them in some degree as his headquarters escort. Their place on the march was usually near him, and if any piece of work was to be done of an especially important or daring character, he generally called upon the Coyotes to perform it. Lieutenant Bacon, whom General Sully had appointed acting assistant quartermaster, was an officer of the Dakota Cavalry; and as his assistant Al soon found himself on terms of easy familiarity with the entire gallant command. This was espe-

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cially true after he had one day dashed out with a party of them after a small herd of buffalo which came in view as they topped a rise, a little more than a mile in advance. A dozen of the Dakota cavalrymen put spurs to their horses and galloped after the enticing game, and Al and Captain Feilner joined them.

Al's horse was a sturdy animal, smaller than Captain Feilner's but long-winded. When they had ridden two or three miles, gradually gaining on their game, the herd suddenly divided at a dry slough bed in the prairie, part keeping on north and part turning east. Most of the cavalrymen turned to follow the buffalo which had swung east, but two or three, with Captain Feilner and Al, galloped on after the others. One of the troopers, a tall, slim young fellow wearing the chevrons of a corporal, who rode his long-legged black horse like an Indian, gradually drew ahead of the rest as they came nearer and nearer to the game, until finally he brought himself abreast of the herd. Handling his horse with the greatest skill, he worked in alongside of the largest buffalo bull. Then, drawing his short Sharp's car-

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bine, he leaned over, brought the muzzle near to the animal's fore shoulder and fired. The buffalo ran on for thirty or forty feet, then stumbled, fell, rose again and, after staggering a short distance, fell once more and for the last time. The corporal, calmly slipping his carbine back into its boot, rode up to the dead buffalo and began cutting away the choicest portions of it to carry back to the command.

Meantime Al and Captain Feilner galloped on, some distance behind the corporal. But the Captain's horse was becoming badly winded and at last he swung off to one side and took a long distance shot, without result. Al, though his horse, too, was beginning to show some signs of weariness, kept on until about fifty yards from the flank and rear of the herd when, not wishing to exhaust his horse, he decided to take his chance on a long shot. He accordingly pulled up and, taking hasty aim with the long Spencer rifle he was carrying, fired at the nearest animal he could see through the dust. Then he lowered his rifle and looked, but the buffalo seemed to be running as fast and as steadily as ever. He was about to turn back, disappointed, to join

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Captain Feilner, when he heard the corporal, a little way behind, shouting at him,

"You hit her! You hit her! Keep going; use your revolver!"

Somewhat doubtful, Al urged his horse again to a gallop and kept on after the herd, Captain Feilner and the corporal following him. But, true enough, before he had covered a quarter of a mile he saw the animal he had fired at begin to drop behind the others. In another quarter of a mile he had overtaken it. It proved to be a good sized cow, which, as he approached, stopped and turned upon him with lowered head, frothing mouth and angry eyes. He drew his revolver, the one that had belonged to his father and that he had used at Fort Ridgely, and cautiously urged his frightened horse toward the cow. As he came within twenty-five or thirty feet, she charged at him, but he spurred his horse forward and as she passed behind him, he fired at her eye. It was a lucky shot, for she rolled over like a log and lay still. In a moment Captain Feilner and the corporal rode up, the latter's saddle already loaded with thirty or forty pounds of choice meat

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cut from his own quarry. He dismounted and walked up to Al.

"That was a fine shot at the distance," said he. "I did n't think you would make a hit. And you finished her in good shape. Do you know where to cut off the best pieces for eating?"

"No, I don't," replied Al. "I never killed one before."

"Let me show you," said the other, drawing out his knife, "so that you 'll know next time."

"What is your name?" asked Al, as they worked, handing up the pieces to the Captain, who tied them to his own and Al's saddles. "You must be a veteran at it, the way you knocked over that big fellow."

"Oh, I 've killed a few of them," answered the cavalryman, modestly. "It is n't much of a trick when you know how. My name is Charles Wright, corporal in Company A, First Dakota Cavalry."

They were soon riding back to the column with the welcome supply of fresh meat, joining on the way the members of the other party, who had killed three buffalo of the bunch they had followed. On

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She charged at him as he fired

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arriving at the column they were soundly berated by General Sully for their temerity in venturing so far; for if a party of Indians of any size had cut in between them and the main body they might easily have all been killed. Captain Feilner, who, being an engineer and also, incidentally, a naturalist, was fond of wandering aside from the line of march to examine the country, laughed incredulously at the General's misgivings.

"General, I do not believe there are enough Indians within one hundred miles to endanger the number of us who went out there," said he.

"Well, there are," replied General Sully, positively, "don't make any mistake about that. And if you 're not more careful, Feilner, you 'll get your scalp lifted some day on one of your foolhardy side trips after buffalo or rocks or petrified beetles. As for you, Briscoe," he continued, addressing Al, "if you want to die young, just keep on following those Coyotes wherever they lead." With a grim smile, he jerked his thumb over his shoulder toward the dusty squadron just behind them, who at the moment were welcoming Corporal Wright and his

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meat-laden companions with yells and whoops of delight. "Those fellows are the most reckless devils in the Northwest and they 'll get you into more tight holes than you can get out of unless you 're as bad as they are."

Al felt that this was the highest compliment possible to the Dakota boys and so, indeed, General Sully meant it to be. That night at supper in the bivouac the staff and the Coyotes, at least, fared sumptuously, with hot and tender buffalo steaks to go with their hardtack, fried potatoes and coffee.

It was several days after the buffalo hunt, on June 28, to be exact, that the command broke camp at daylight and marched forward toward the crossing of the Little Cheyenne River. The troops marched in two columns, as usual, the supply train being in the centre between them, while the Dakota Cavalry rode a short distance in advance. Their commander, Captain Nelson Miner, was that day acting field officer of the day, having charge of the guard details. As the day wore on it became hot and sultry and the dust suffocating. Every one was suffering with thirst and finally, as they approached

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within a few miles of the Cheyenne, Captain Feilner decided to ride ahead to that stream in search of water. Two soldiers from one of the commands in the main column volunteered to accompany him. Al was working over his books in one of the wagons of the train when the Captain rode past and called out to him,

"I am going on to the Little Cheyenne to get a drink. Do you want to go with me?"

"I should like to," Al called back, "but I 'm busy now. Look out for Indians."

"Oh, yes," replied the Captain, smiling, "There are three of us. I guess we can force a passage against all the Indians we shall see."

He waved his hand and disappeared through the dust up the column, the two soldiers trotting hard after him. Al resumed his work and in a moment forgot all about Captain Feilner. When he had finished he mounted his horse and rode up to the head of the column where he fell in with the rest of the staff around General Sully. They had been riding along in leisurely fashion for some time, their weary horses walking with drooping heads, the rid-

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ers lolling in their saddles, when Al's glance, wandering aimlessly over the desolate landscape ahead, was arrested by two small dots which suddenly appeared on the top of a prairie ridge far in front and came racing down the exposed slope in the direction of the column. Something in their appearance made his heart jump into his throat. Instinctively he reached out and touched the arm of General Sully, who was talking to Lieutenant Dale.

"General," he cried, pointing ahead. "Look there! What are those specks?"

The general, startled, glanced in the direction indicated. His expression changed to one of dismay.

"By God," he exclaimed, snatching out his field-glasses, "something 's happened over there; there are only two of them. Feilner 's got in trouble; I knew he would."

He touched his horse and started forward at a trot, his staff following. The riders, coming at a furious pace, soon reached them. They were the two soldiers who had ridden ahead with the Captain, hatless and without arms, their horses panting with the frantic pace they had been making. The

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leading trooper jerked up in front of the General and, saluting, cried breathlessly,

"Captain Feilner is killed, General!"

General Sully slapped his field-glasses back into their case and clenched his fist with an enraged gesture.

"I knew it," he growled, savagely. "The best officer I had. Curse these infernal redskins!" It must be admitted that at such moments General Sully did not hesitate to use stronger language than is allowable in print. "Where was he killed?"

"At the crossing of the Cheyenne, sir. He 's lying there now."

"How did it happen?"

"Why, when we reached there, sir, the Captain got off his horse and went down the bank,— it 's steep where we were,— and got a drink, while we held his horse. Then we dismounted and went down, leaving our horses and carbines with him. He was sitting under a little tree. While we were down by the creek we heard a rifle shot and looked up and saw three Injuns riding up toward our horses. There is good grass in the bottom and we 'd pick-

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eted them, but they got scared and pulled the picket-pins and ran off before the redskins got them. We could see the Captain lying there but we did n't have our guns so all we could do was to hide out till the Injuns rode off north across the creek. Then we ran after our horses and came back."

"Three Indians, you say? And they rode north?" questioned the General, sharply.

"Yes, sir."

Sully put his horse to the gallop and rode swiftly toward the head of the approaching column. As he reached Captain Miner, he pulled up.

"Captain," he cried, "three Indians have killed Captain Feilner at the crossing of the Little Cheyenne, just ahead of us here. They rode north, across the creek. Take Company A and follow the cowardly assassins and bring them to me, dead or alive; mind you, dead or alive!"

"Feilner killed!" exclaimed Captain Miner. "The dirty scoundrels!"

He swung his horse so sharply that it reared, and dashed back along the column of Company A

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until he reached First Sergeant A. M. English, who was in command.

"Sergeant," he cried, in ringing tones which every eagerly listening man in the company could hear, "Captain Feilner has been killed, and we are ordered to pursue the Indians!"

Then he galloped back to the head of the column and, rising in his stirrups, shouted,

"Column left, march! Company, trot! Gallop! Follow me, boys!"

With a rising thunder of hoofs and a swirling dust cloud behind them, through which the glint of carbines, sabres, and accoutrements flashed in the sunshine, the cavalry swept over the hill in front and away. The General rode hotly after them to the crest and watched them streaming through the depression and up the slopes beyond. Then he laughed grimly.

"See the d—n Coyotes," he exclaimed. "They go like a flock of sheep! They 'll kill their horses before they catch the redskins. Ride after them and tell Miner to take it easy."

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Al, who ever since hearing the distressing news had been quivering with impotent rage over the cruel fate of his good friend, Captain Feilner, caught the General's last words. He turned with a swift salute, even as he put spurs to his horse.

"I 'll tell him, General!" he cried, and rode away like the wind.

"Here, you!" cried the General, "Come back!"

But Al did not want to hear.

"Oh, let him go," Sully added, in a lower tone, "I reckon he 's a Coyote himself," and he chuckled as he saw Al put his horse over a gully at the bottom of the hill and tear up the opposite rise close on the heels of the last ragged end of the racing Dakota Cavalry.

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CHAPTER IX

THE REVENGE OF THE COYOTES

AS he gained the top of the rise, Al saw a confused and scattered array of horsemen just ahead of him, all going at a sharp gallop with no attempt at formation, the men leaning forward in their saddles as if riding to the finish of a hard race. He understood that it was a foolish pace for what would probably prove a long pursuit, but nothing could be done to slacken it until he could overtake Captain Miner, who was at the very head of the company. Al and every one else had been very much surprised at the impetuous manner in which Captain Miner had started out, for though brave as a lion, he was usually very deliberate in movement and gentle of speech and his voice had a plaintive, appealing tone which often contrasted oddly with the orders he was giving. Altogether, his dashing and devoted followers often found much to amuse

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them in the ways of their mild commander. That he had been profoundly moved by the death of Captain Feilner was evident; otherwise he would never have urged his little roan mare to a gallop, for his habit was to ride her at an ambling trot, even in the most exciting and dangerous situations.

Al hurried his own wiry little horse to greater exertions and began forging to the front. Before long he left all except the leaders behind and as they went over the hill and down into the valley of the Cheyenne, he was almost up to Captain Miner. The latter's face was set steadily to the front, however, as he scanned the country ahead for sight of the fugitive Indians, and Al could not attract his attention until he had overtaken him, almost on the bank of the creek. Then he shouted,

"Captain Miner! Captain Miner!"

The Captain turned and drew in his horse.

"Well?" he inquired, lifting his eyebrows slightly, "What is it?" It was plain he had recovered his composure, for his voice was placid.

"General Sully's compliments, sir, and he sug-

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gests that you take it a little slower, as the horses may be exhausted before you can catch the Indians," answered Al.

Captain Miner pulled at his beard thoughtfully.

"Oh, pshaw!" he said, a disapproving note in his voice, "I wonder how we are to catch them if we don't keep going?"

"I don't know, sir," replied Al, as side by side they rode their horses into the creek, "but that was what the General told me to say to you."

The stream was shallow and narrow but its banks were composed of deep, swampy mud through which their horses floundered and plunged, knee deep. Above and below them soldiers of the Coyotes were coming at the stream, some clearing it in a bound, where the banks were solid enough for a jump, while others became so deeply mired that they could not get out again until the rest of the command had passed from sight beyond. Just as Al's and the Captain's horses waded out of the creek and came up, snorting, on the opposite bank, they heard some of the men already across, shouting,

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"There are the Indians! Over there!"

At this moment a headquarters orderly galloped into sight and halted beside the Captain.

"The General is afraid you will ruin your horses," he cried. "He thinks you had better come back."

Again Captain Miner tugged at his beard, a habit of his when annoyed or perplexed.

"Is that an order?" he inquired.

"No, sir, I think not," the orderly replied, hesitatingly. "It 's a suggestion."

"Well," directed the Captain, gently, "will you, then, please report to the General that we are in sight of the Indians and without I have a positive order to return, I propose to take them."

He turned to the front again and put his little roan into her accustomed trot, calling out to the men nearest him, as he waved his hand at them,

"Take it a bit slower, boys; don't run your horses. We 'll catch the Indians all right."

Al's ambitious little sorrel, seeing other horses ahead of him, was tugging at the bit and Al gradually let him have his head, leaving the Captain a

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short distance behind while the rest of the company was strung out for a mile or more in the rear. Al soon found himself among the leaders, riding neck and neck with Sergeant English and Corporal Wright, while Troopers Tom Frick, George Pike, George McClellan, and others whose names he did not know were near to them. The country was almost level where they were riding and they could now see the three Indians plainly, though still a long way ahead. The fugitives were pushing with all the speed they could make for a group of rough hills in advance, evidently hoping to escape pursuit in the ravines. To reach the hills, their course must be at a slight angle across that of the soldiers.

"Let 's try to head them off," suggested Sergeant English. "Bear a little to the right."

The change of direction was made and as they continued to creep up on the Indians, whose ponies were evidently wearing out, they could see the latter look around anxiously every minute or two. The savages were urging their animals with quirt and heel, and though they responded but feebly, their strength lasted long enough to take them to the base

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of the hills before the pursuers had come within carbine range. As they reached the first steep slope, the Indians suddenly threw themselves from their ponies' backs and, clinging to their guns, ran up to the top of the hill on foot and disappeared. As they came nearer to the hill, the soldiers were startled to see on its crest, just where the fugitives had disappeared, a very large body of warriors with war-bonnets and robes waving in the breeze.

"Well, say, what do you think of that?" exclaimed Corporal Wright. "There must be two or three hundred of them."

The advance party reluctantly slowed down until Captain Miner and some of the other men had come up to them. The Captain examined for a moment the ominous looking group ahead. Then he turned a wistful glance on the thirty or forty men behind him and said, plaintively,

"There seem to be a good many of them, but I think we 'd better charge, boys." He touched his mare and trotted forward, calling in a soothing tone, "Yes, that 's what we 'll do. Charge, boys, charge."

Some of the men laughed explosively, partly with

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nervousness, partly with amusement at their commander's quaint orders, but not one hesitated. Spreading out in a long, irregular line, they dashed at the hill, shouting,

"Death to the murderers!"

But as they approached the crest, again laughter broke out, rolling from one flank of the line to the other and back again, in boisterous waves. The supposed Indians were nothing more than a patch of mullen stalks, transformed by distance and the peculiar condition of the air into a resemblance to human beings. The men looked at each other sheepishly, but as they reached the top of the hill, they sobered again. The three real Indians were just disappearing down a ravine on the other side. Pell-mell the cavalry rushed after them, Captain Miner and Sergeant English now in the lead. The horses slid and stumbled down through the ravine, but the wily savages were still ahead, dodging about among obstructions to the view which none but Indians could have found. Presently the ravine widened out into a valley in which no sign of life was to be seen. The whole body of cavalry was going on into

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the valley when suddenly the Indians rose as if from the ground, a little way to one side of the course the soldiers were taking, and fired at the Captain and the Sergeant, behind whom Al was closely following.

The fugitives had taken refuge in an old buffalo wallow, forming a perfect natural rifle-pit; and if they had not mistakenly thought themselves discovered and risen to fire, their pursuers would probably have swept by without finding them. But now they were brought to bay and with cheers and yells of delight a number of troopers sprang from their saddles and encircling the buffalo wallow, though at some distance from it, threw themselves flat on the ground with carbines cocked, waiting for an Indian to show himself. It was like a pack of wolves surrounding their quarry. Fortunately, neither the Captain nor Sergeant English had been injured by the first fire and they joined the circle of besiegers, while the men who were holding the horses formed a wider circle back on the prairie out of range.

Al's horse, though of course new to him, was an

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old campaigner which had gone out from Fort Randall on more than one forced march. His name, Cottontail, had doubtless been bestowed upon him by some former soldier rider in humorous reference to his fluffy tail, which was almost white. He could be trusted to stand through any amount of noise or excitement if his reins were thrown over his head so that they hung on the ground at his feet. Al left him thus, standing alone, and running forward, dropped down in the ring of dismounted men beside Corporal Wright. For a few moments the Indians kept out of sight. Then something rose above the rim of the buffalo wallow and Al, who was watching that spot with intense eagerness as he lay sprawled in the short prairie grass, raised his rifle to fire. But the corporal slapped down the barrel.

"Don't shoot at that," said he, "or the boys 'll laugh at you. It is n't a redskin; it 's just a breech cloth they 're sticking up to draw our fire. Look closer."

Al looked as directed and saw, on more careful scrutiny, that it was, indeed, only a piece of cloth. None of the men fired at it, but some of them hooted

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derisively, for they knew that the Indians' scheme was to draw a volley, when they could safely spring up and fire at their besiegers before the latter could reload. Al lowered his rifle in disgust.

"How are we going to get them if they never stick their heads up?" he inquired, impatiently.

"Well, they can stay and starve to death," answered Wright, grinning. "We 're able to hold out longer at that game than they are. But Captain 'll order us to charge pretty soon if they don't do something."

However, the Indians could not stand the suspense. Their ruse having failed, one of them soon raised his gun and then his head above the edge of the hole and fired quickly at the first soldier he sighted. His aim was bad and he had misjudged the alertness of his foes. Almost before he had shot, a dozen carbines cracked and he dropped back more suddenly than he had risen. All those in the encircling line heard, or thought they heard, the dull thud of the bullets as they struck him. A disjointed cheer ran round among the men.

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"There goes one of the murderers!" they shouted. "Now for the next."

The circle began to contract, the men crawling and hitching forward, a few inches at a time. For some minutes this was kept up on all sides of the hole, until they had approached within a few rods of it. Still the Indians gave no sign. Then again the soldiers heard, plainly audible in the silence, the persuasive voice of Captain Miner, raised slightly above its ordinary tone;

"Charge, boys, charge!"

As if released by a spring, at those welcome words the Coyotes leaped to their feet as one man and with a fierce shout rushed forward. The Indians heard them coming and as the soldiers approached within twenty feet of their refuge they arose and with a blood-curdling yell fired their guns straight into the faces of their assailants. Good fortune was surely with the Dakota boys that day, for the bullets, even at that deadly range, whistled by harmlessly, and in less time than it takes to tell it, a score of carbines flashed and the savage assassins,

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riddled with bullets, fell back across the body of their already dead companion. Thus speedily had the cold-blooded murder of Captain Feilner been avenged.

The soldiers, talking together excitedly, gathered around the edge of the buffalo wallow; and two or three, including Corporal Wright, sprang down into it to take trophies, such as beads or feathers, from the dead warriors. Al was standing on the brink of the hole watching the Corporal bend over one of the bodies, when, to his amazement, he saw another of the supposedly dead Indians raise the muzzle of his musket toward the Corporal's back.

"Look out, Corporal!" shouted Al, at the same instant shooting into the Indian. The Corporal leaped high in air and turned round just in time to see the musket drop from the hands of the warrior as he fell back and expired.

"Why, he was n't dead at all!" exclaimed Al, aghast at the suddenness of the thing. "He was playing possum and he almost had you, Corporal."

Wright, a little pale, scrambled out of the hole and grasped Al's hand warmly.

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The Indian raised his rifle to shoot Corporal Wright

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"You 've saved my life, sure enough," said he, earnestly. "I hope I can do as much for you sometime."

"I hope there won't be any need," answered Al, smiling, "but I 'm very glad I saw him in time."

"It 's lucky for Charlie that you did," cried Sergeant English, "it looks so mighty suspicious to be shot in the back."

Wright, laughing, wheeled like lightning on the joker and made a clutch at him; but the Sergeant sprang out of the way and raced off, with Wright close on his heels, shouting,

"Here, come back, while I thrash you for that!"

With their sabres catching between their legs, the two brave fellows, playing like boys, looked comical enough; and the rest of the men, all of them in high spirits over their success, yelled and applauded loudly as they dodged about over the prairie until so completely out of breath that they sunk to the ground, still laughing, and lay there panting.

As soon as they had caught their breath they arose again and returned to the buffalo wallow.

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Captain Miner was standing thoughtfully beside it, looking down at the dead Indians.

"I don't see what we are going to do with these fellows," he said, doubtfully, glancing around at his men. "The General ordered me to bring them to him, dead or alive, and of course we 've got to do it. But we must be fifteen miles from the column and they 'll be kind of awkward to take that far."

"Strip off some of their ornaments," suggested somebody, "'and take them to the General."

The Captain, interested, peered in the direction of the speaker.

"Why, that is n't a bad idea," he answered, gratefully. "Yes, I think that will do, boys."

A score of men jumped into the hole while one man ran and brought a sack in which he had been carrying oats for his horse. In less time than it takes to tell it the trophies, stripped from the trappings of the Indians with sabres and knives, were deposited in the sack, which Captain Miner fastened to the pommel of his saddle.

The company were soon mounted and riding back toward the Cheyenne, where the main command

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had bivouacked for the night, gathering in on the way the stragglers who had been unable to keep up during the chase. About midway of their march they were met by Lieutenant Bacon, whom General Sully had sent out with an ambulance carrying water and commissaries to the Coyotes, knowing that they would be both hungry and thirsty. Bacon was jubilant over the success of Company A, for he was its First Lieutenant, and he gave out the supplies liberally, assisted by Al.

"Young fellow," said he to the latter, with a twinkle in his eye, "what do you mean by running off to play with these boys here and leaving me to attend to all the work of feeding the army?"

"Cottontail ran away with me, sir," answered Al, unabashed.

"That 'll do," exclaimed the Lieutenant. "It 's evident you 're not a descendant of George Washington. But I don't blame you for going; wish I had gone myself and let the army wait for its supper."

The command marched into camp about sunset. Fires were burning brightly here and there, and as

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they approached, the soldiers gathered in crowds to see and cheer them. Captain Miner led his men directly to the headquarters tents, before which General Sully and a group of staff and other officers collected as the dusty men on their tired horses marched up and halted before them. Without dismounting, Captain Miner rode straight to the General, saluted, and loosing the sack, dropped it on the ground at Sully's feet.

"We got them, General," he murmured, absently.

As the sack fell, the trophies rolled from it and lay in plain view.

"Well," said the General, "Captain, this is certainly pretty good evidence that you got them. I thank you and your men for the vigor and gallantry and success of your pursuit. Please keep these till to-morrow morning. I will give you further orders concerning them."

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CHAPTER X

THE FORT ON THE RIVER

ANOTHER day of easy marching brought the column to Swan Lake Creek, about fifteen miles due north of the Little Cheyenne, where camp was made to await the arrival of the Second Brigade, from Minnesota, which, according to the arrangement between Generals Sibley and Sully, was to join the expedition there. Scouting parties were sent on north toward Bois Cache Creek to look for the expected troops; and while awaiting their return Al had an opportunity to see illustrated in rather an amusing way one phase of General Sully's bluff, soldierly character.

Some of the regiments which had marched from Fort Sully were quite recently organized, and the General had not yet made the acquaintance of all their officers; so at Swan Lake Creek, having a little leisure time, he asked the commanders of these

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regiments to bring to headquarters such of their officers as he had not met. Among them appeared a young lieutenant of the Sixth Iowa Cavalry, dressed in a spotless new uniform of the latest regulation cut, set off by a red silk sash and a resplendent sabre-belt, and very strongly perfumed with musk. General Sully, like General Grant, was very modest in his dress, and his uniform, except for the shoulder-straps, differed little from that of a private, while sometimes in the field he even wore civilian garments, such as corduroy trousers and white felt hat. He detested gorgeous uniforms, especially when the wearer had no particular claim to soldierly eminence or ability. When his eye fell upon this particular military dandy, he looked the young man over contemptuously and his lip curled as he sniffed the odor of musk. Al, who was standing by, saw that something was coming, and listened in amused silence.

"General Sully," said Major Ten Broeck, who had brought the fledgeling officer for presentation, "allow me to introduce Lieutenant C——, of Company ——, Sixth Iowa Cavalry."

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"Lieutenant C——, eh?" grunted the General. "Well, Lieutenant, how long have you been in the volunteer service?"

"About six months," replied the other, seeming to feel conscious that such a lengthy period had made him a model military man in every particular.

"Six months?" cried the General, striking his fist down on his knee. "Why, great Heavens, man, I 've been in the regular service for twenty years, and don't smell half as bad as you do!"

With that he waved his hand impatiently to Major Ten Broeck to indicate that the interview was ended, and the crestfallen young officer withdrew hastily.

On the morning of June 30 the men, idling about the camp, descried the columns of the Second Brigade, long, narrow ribbons in the distance, crawling toward them across the limitless, gently rolling plain. Rejoicing and excitement broke out on every hand, for it meant that there would be no delay in the progress of the campaign, as many had feared there might be, since the Minnesota troops had been obliged to make a march of nearly three hundred and fifty miles from Fort Ridgely to the rendez-

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vous. That the junction of the two brigades was effected so promptly in that vast wilderness was a matter for congratulation, and General Sully seemed to feel that he could not too highly praise Colonel Minor T. Thomas, the commanding officer of the Minnesota column, for the promptness and skill with which he had conducted his march. The newcomers went into camp beside the First Brigade, and the men of the two commands were soon mingled, telling one another of their respective experiences.

That evening, as soon as he had finished his duties for the day and eaten his supper, Al strolled into the camp of the Second, or, as it was generally called, the Minnesota Brigade, to see if he could find there any old acquaintances, particularly any who might have been at Fort Ridgely. Here and there fires were burning and the men were lounging about in groups, talking, playing cards, or otherwise amusing themselves. Long lines of cavalry horses extended between the company streets, securely tied to picket lines; and near the creek a large train of wagons was corralled, its outspanned mule teams, crowded within the great circle of wagons,

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seeming almost countless. As he walked along through the haze of dust made golden by the setting sun, Al noticed a cavalryman sitting cross-legged by one of the fires, engaged in the unmilitary task of sewing a button on his coat. The soldier's back was toward him, but that back had an oddly familiar look. Al walked around until he could see the trooper's profile, then, with an exclamation of surprise and pleasure, he sprang forward and slapped the amateur tailor on the shoulder.

"Wallace Smith!" he exclaimed. "Say, but I 'm glad to see you, old fellow."

Wallace looked up, startled, then sprang to his feet and gripped Al's hand.

"Why, Al Briscoe!" he cried, "what on earth are you doing here? I had no idea you were within a thousand miles."

"I came up with General Sully from St. Louis to help look for my brother Tommy," Al answered. "And you?"

"I am a private in the Eighth Minnesota," explained Wallace. "I became eighteen just before the column left Minnesota, and as soon as I did, I

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enlisted." He looked inquiringly at Al's civilian clothes. "Aren't you in the service?" he asked.

"No; not old enough," Al replied. "But I 'm serving just about the same as a soldier. Practically I am on General Sully's staff."

"Whew-w.!" whistled Wallace. "Lucky boy. That must be great. How did it happen?"

Mutual explanations followed and before long each of the boys knew the main facts of the other's history since they parted, nearly two years before.

"There are other old acquaintances of yours with us," said Wallace, presently. "You remember Sergeant Jones, who commanded the artillery at Fort Ridgely?"

"Indeed I do," Al replied, recalling with quickened pulses the Sergeant's gallantry. "Is he here?"

"Yes. He is now Captain Jones, of the Third Minnesota Battery and he is in command of our artillery; two six-pounder field guns and two twelve-pounder mountain howitzers, of his battery."

"He certainly deserved promotion for his work at Fort Ridgely," exclaimed Al, enthusiastically.

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"Yes, he did," agreed Wallace, "and his men say he is a fine officer."

"Is Lieutenant Sheehan along?" asked Al.

"No, the Fifth has been down South for nearly two years, and he with them. But you remember Major Brown? He is chief of scouts with us, and has a company of about fifty Indians. Then there are several men among our different regiments who were at Fort Ridgely as refugees and who have since enlisted."

"How many men are in your brigade?" Al asked.

"I believe between fifteen and sixteen hundred," Wallace replied, "not, of course, including the teamsters with the wagon train. Let me see. There is our entire regiment, the Eighth Infantry; we are all mounted for this campaign. Minor T. Thomas is our Colonel, but as he is in command of the brigade, Lieutenant-Colonel Rogers is actually commanding the regiment. Then there are four companies of the Thirtieth Wisconsin, under Colonel Dill, and six companies of the Second Minnesota Cavalry under Colonel McLaren, besides the artil-

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lery and a train of ninety-three wagons and twelve ambulances, each drawn by a six-mule team. We have quite a herd of beef cattle, too. So you see there are enough animals with us alone to eat up all the grass in this country for miles around in short order; and I suppose there are about as many with your brigade."

"Yes, there are a lot of them," agreed Al. "We can't stay very long in one place and find forage enough, unless rain comes to make the grass grow."

The boys, very happy to meet one another again, talked for several hours and then at last they separated for the night, each promising to see the other as often as possible. The camp had quieted down, and most of the men of both brigades, weary with the marching and other work of the past few days, were wrapped in deep slumber; but all around the camps were heavy guards, and the sentries, alert and watchful, were pacing their beats. They looked shadowy and ghost-like under the starlight as Al passed along, making his way through the company streets of little white dog-tents, each backed by its long picket-line of horses, standing or lying almost

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motionless in the gloom. It was not many minutes after he had reached his own cot in one of the big Sibley tents of headquarters before Al, too, was sleeping the profound and dreamless sleep of youth and health.

General Sully's orders from General Pope were to establish a fort on the Missouri River somewhere near the point where the Long Lake River entered the stream. The plan of the Government at this time was to erect and maintain a chain of military posts, of which the new fort should be one, extending from Minnesota to central Montana, which should serve not only to hold the Indians in check but also to protect emigrants going through the Sioux country from the East, across Dakota, to the new Montana gold-mining districts. A well marked trail had become established through this section since 1862, but the hostility of the Indians was such that none but very strong parties of emigrants could make use of it. The Government wished to render the route more safe; and the new fort on the Missouri, as well as the one General Sully was expected to build on the Yellowstone, was part of the chain,

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which began at Fort Abercrombie, Minnesota, on the Red River of the North.

For four days after the junction of the two brigades, the entire command lay in camp for the purpose of resting both men and animals. The time passed quietly and not unpleasantly, but with no unusual incidents. Several summer thunder showers came, greatly improving the grass and relieving the discomfort which the expedition had previously suffered from the dust. Though nearly every one was idle most of the time, Al found plenty to keep him busy. The camp was seven miles from the Missouri, where the steamboats lay, and the Dakota Cavalry was ordered to the river as a guard for them. Then the wagon-train, in sections, went down to reload from the reserve supplies on the boats. Thus Al was frequently obliged to go back and forth on Cottontail between the encampment and the river, sometimes finding a chance while at the latter point to spend a little time with his friends of the Dakota Cavalry or with those acquaintances among the steamboat men whom he had come to

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know during the long trip from St. Louis to Fort Sully.

At length, on the third of July, General Sully put the First Brigade in motion for the mouth of Long Lake River, distant about one hundred miles, and, after instructing the Second Brigade to proceed thither also on the next day, he set out himself on the *Island City* to examine the river banks for a suitable site on which to build the new fort. As an escort for the boat he took a company of troops, and most of the members of his staff also went with him; but Al remained with the column, as his duties demanded his presence there. The marches were long but not exhausting, and by the eighth of July all the forces were assembled on the Missouri a short distance above the mouth of Long Lake River. Directly opposite, on the west bank of the Missouri, was the site on which the General had decided to build Fort Rice, as the new post was to be called.

The location was an ideal one. It was a level tableland with a permanent bank along the river nearly one hundred feet high, and behind it rose a

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majestic range of sandstone bluffs, which, just below the post swept out boldly to the brink of the Missouri and followed it down to the mouth of the Cannonball River, eight miles south. Along the base of the bluffs extended a long, narrow belt of heavy timber, and another and much larger forest covered the wide valley above the post. Immediately in front of the latter the river was narrow, insuring a good crossing at nearly all seasons, its only disadvantage being that, owing to the high bank on which the fort stood, the ferry and steamboat landing had to be made about half a mile down stream.

On the arrival of the army, a ferry, consisting of a long cable stretched from bank to bank across the Missouri, on which a flatboat was guided back and forth, was immediately put in operation. Some of the troops, including the Dakota Cavalry, crossed on it and went into camp near the site of the fort. The steamers were then unloaded and put to work crossing the rest of the troops and the wagon-train, and the army was soon all assembled on the west bank. Two sawmills, one operated by

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a steam-engine and the other by horse-power, the entire equipment for which had been brought along, were now started and began rapidly getting out building materials, the timber being brought from the near-by forests. Great cottonwood logs for the walls were squared to dimensions of six by eight inches, and planks and boards were sawed for the interior work. The stockade, with bastions on the northeast and southwest corners, was also built of cottonwood.

The four companies of the Thirteenth Wisconsin, under Colonel Dill, which were to be left to garrison the completed work, also constructed it. They were composed of men from the Wisconsin lumbering districts, who knew their business thoroughly; and with so many hands to do the work it proceeded rapidly. In an incredibly short time barracks for eight companies, officers' quarters, hospital, and storehouses, began to take on an appearance of permanency which must have filled the scouts of the hostile Indians with anger and dread, as they lay watching day by day from distant ridges and buttes.

A short time after camp was pitched at Fort Rice

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a long line of wagons made its appearance on the hills across the river and came dragging slowly down the trail made by the army, until it reached the river bank. It was a large party of emigrants from Minnesota, which had followed the Second Brigade for the purpose of having the protection of the army in crossing the country between the Missouri and the Yellowstone. There were about a hundred and twenty-five wagons in the train and several hundred people, including many women and children, and they were bound for the gold fields. Their wagons were drawn by ox-teams. Their arrival drew forth an explosion from General Sully.

"The idea of bringing women and children into such a country as this," he exclaimed. "I 've got to protect them because the Government has guaranteed them safe conduct through the Sioux lands and told them that I will look after them. And so here they are, with a lot of lumbering ox-teams, good for about six miles a day. How in the name of sense do they expect to keep up with cavalry?"

"You can detach an escort to stay with them," suggested one of the staff officers.

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"Yes, of course I can," returned the General. "That 's one of the worst features of the business. We 'll have to cut down our fighting force in order to look after this travelling nursery, and the whole army 'll have to potter along and mark time when the Indians are just ahead, so that the ladies can have their noontime nap. They will be everlastingly hindering us in one way or another. I wish I could send them back where they came from."

"Why don't you?" asked some one.

The General looked at the speaker disgustedly.

"Do you know what would happen if I sent them back?" he asked. "I should be reprimanded by the Secretary of War, at the very least. It seems as though the petting and protection of a handful of emigrants, most of them runaways from the draft, is regarded as of more importance than the success of military operations; at least, that has usually been my experience in the past. Also, a howl would go up all over the country about the cruelty of that hard-hearted military dictator, Sully, who refused to lend to a few poor struggling emigrants the assistance of his mighty army. Oh, no,

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I must take them along; that 's all there is to it."

A day or two after this, Al was in one of the supply wagons, when a shadow came across the rear opening of the canvas top, whose back-flaps he had drawn aside in order to see better as he worked. He looked up to see peering in at him two bearded individuals wearing wide-brimmed felt hats, checked shirts, and blue overalls, the latter tucked into the tops of their cowhide boots. They were evidently members of the emigrant party.

"We want to buy some grub from you," said one of the men, looking over the contents of the wagon as if he were inspecting the shelves of a grocery store. "Gimme a box o' that hardtack and a couple o' slabs o' bacon and about ten pounds o' sugar, and,—"

"Why, I can't sell you anything," interrupted Al, taken very much by surprise.

"Sure you kin," persisted the man, jingling some coins in his hand. "I 've got money; I 'll pay cash."

"But these are Government stores," Al answered. "I 'm not authorized to sell them."

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"Oh, well, that 'll be all right," the would-be customer dismissed the objection with a wave of the hand. "We 're gettin' low on grub over in our camp, and we want to hang on to what we 've got till we git acrost the Yellowstone. O' course we 've got to eat, and the army 's got to supply us, 'specially when we 're willin' to pay fer stuff. Old Sully knows that." He spoke as if he considered the idea of paying as a great concession, for which the Government ought to be very grateful.

"I do not think that *General* Sully brought supplies along for more than his own men," replied Al, putting emphasis upon the title, for he resented the disrespectful tone used by the emigrant. "However," he added, "I will ask the quartermaster."

He jumped from the wagon and, followed by the two emigrants, sought Lieutenant Bacon.

"Why, I never heard of such brass," exclaimed the latter in an undertone when Al had found him and explained the demands of the emigrants. "Of course we have n't any supplies for these fellows. Why did n't they bring along enough to last them?"

He turned to the men and repeated what Al had

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already told them. But they were stubborn and declined to accept the quartermaster's refusal. Indeed, they became angry and began condemning the General, the Northwestern Indian Expedition, and the army, in unmeasured terms.

"Now, that will do," at last exclaimed Lieutenant Bacon, sharply, tired of their insolence. "I 'll take you to General Sully and he can decide the matter."

When the question had been explained to him, the General was plainly irritated but he held his temper in check.

"I have not enough supplies here now to outfit this post until next Spring and to carry my army through the coming campaign," said he. "Some of my boats are now busy bringing up supplies which were left at Farm Island, that there may be sufficient to take us through. Why did n't you bring enough yourselves to last you?"

"Because we was told we could get 'em from you," replied one of the men.

"Who told you that?"

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"Well, them that ought to know," answered the other, evasively.

"They were mistaken," said the General. "I simply cannot let you have supplies."

"Well, it 's a blamed funny thing," exclaimed one of the emigrants, assuming a tone of outraged virtue, "if a General and a great big army can let poor emigrants starve to death; folks that are goin' out, riskin' their lives and everything to settle up wild land and make this here country great."

"You 're going out from motives of pure patriotism alone, I suppose?" asked the General, sarcastically. "You 're not going because there 's gold out there and you want to make your fortunes?"

"Well, maybe we can make a livin'," answered the emigrant who had done most of the talking, a little abashed, "but we 'll build up the country, just the same."

"That 's very true," the General replied, earnestly, "and I 'm willing to do all that I can to help you through, so long as it does not seriously in-

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terfere with the objects of the campaign I am here to make against the Indians. You can certainly understand that I must and will obey my orders from the Government, regardless of any other considerations. I will afford protection to your train as far as my army is going, but more than that I cannot promise. As for supplies, I am satisfied that you have enough with you to carry you through if you exercise care in their use. I do not believe that men would start out on such an expedition as yours with insufficient food. Am I not right?" He leaned forward in his camp chair and gave the men a searching look. Their eyes fell and they moved their feet uneasily. But the General's glance demanded an answer to his question.

"Mebbe we could scratch along," admitted one of them, reluctantly.

"So I thought," said the General. "You merely figured that by getting army supplies while you were with the troops you could be less sparing with your own. But I can't accommodate you. Good-day."

He turned to other matters, and his disappointed visitors took themselves away, still grumbling.

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Ten days after the troops had arrived on the site of the new fort, a mere naked tract of virgin land perhaps never before trodden by the feet of white men, they were ready to leave it behind them, covered with an extensive and well-built military post which was destined to be occupied by United States soldiers for many years to come. A few lodges of Indians which had come in and surrendered at Fort Rice had confirmed the reports of those at Fort Sully concerning the great encampment of sixteen hundred lodges of hostiles assembled in a strong position somewhere near the head of Heart River or on the Little Missouri. They claimed that they had experienced the greatest difficulty in getting away from the hostile camp, and had finally been able to do so only on the plea of buffalo-hunting. They further declared that the hostiles were confident in their strength and were boasting that they would utterly destroy the army of white soldiers if the latter should venture to attack them. So there was a prospect of plenty of excitement in store when, on the morning of July 18, General Sully, unalarmed by such reports,

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started westward with his army with wagons loaded, troops fully equipped and liberally supplied with ammunition, and horses and mules freshly shod.

Just before starting, the General went on board the *Island City* to give some parting instructions to Captain Lamont, who was under orders to proceed up the Missouri and the Yellowstone, in company with the *Chippewa Falls*, under Captain Hutchison, and the *Alone*, under Captain Rea, to meet the column with fresh supplies when it should reach the Yellowstone. The *Island City* was loaded chiefly with corn for the horses, but she carried also a considerable quantity of barrelled pork for the troops, and most of the building materials for the intended post on the Yellowstone; while the *Chippewa Falls* and the *Alone* carried chiefly rations.

"Now, don't fail me, Captain," said the General, as he turned to leave the *Island City's* deck and follow his troops, already winding out of sight across the plateau and up through a break in the westward bluffs. "My animals will probably find poor pick-

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ing out in that rough country we are going through, and they 'll need corn."

"We 'll be there waiting for you, General, if human exertions can do it," replied Captain Lamont. "But you must remember that the Yellowstone has never been navigated before, and I don't know what snags or rocks we may run into."

"You can make it, and you must," said the General, "and don't forget the place you are to meet me,— the Brasseau Trading House, about sixty miles above the mouth."

"I 'll be on the watch for you," answered the Captain.

"That 's right; be on the watch," the General assented. Then suddenly he opened his field-glass case and took out the glasses. "Here 's something for you to keep watch with," he continued, handing them to the Captain. "I have another pair and you may find these useful. I have carried them for a long time, and they are good glasses."

The Captain thanked him warmly, and the General walked ashore accompanied by his officers, and they mounted their horses.

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"Good-bye, Captain," said Al, as he started to follow them. "I hope you will have a good trip, and that I shall see you soon again."

He little knew, as he spoke, when and under what unforeseen circumstances the last part of his wish was to be fulfilled.

"Thank you, Al," returned the steamboat officer, giving his hand a kindly grip. "The same to you. Don't get yourself shot to pieces; and I hope next time I see you, you will have your brother with you."

"Oh, I hope so," returned Al, earnestly. "We 're sure to find him up there in the Bad Lands."

As he crossed the landing-stage and walked out to where Cottontail was standing, he saw the deck-hand, Jim, leaning against the companion stairs, regarding him with a scowl of hatred, but he gave the fellow hardly a passing thought. He followed the staff at a gallop, and as they passed up the bluffs in the wake of the rear-guard the hills were re-echoing to the bellowing whistle of the steamboats, blowing them a parting salute and Godspeed.

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CHAPTER XI

TRAILING THE HOSTILES

"I WISH I knew where I could get two or three more well-mounted orderlies, with courage and common sense," said General Sully the next day, as the army was wending its way through the rough, picturesque hill country along the Cannonball. "I haven't enough, and it 's hard to tell whether a man can be depended upon until he has been tried."

The remark caused Al to prick up his ears.

"I know a man I think would suit you, General," said he.

"Who?" asked Sully.

"He is a private named Wallace Smith, in the Eighth Minnesota. I knew him at Fort Ridgely. I 'm sure he has plenty of courage and common sense, and his horse is a good one."

Al knew that Wallace was riding Frank, the horse

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that had so nearly lost their scalps for them on the afternoon of the first attack on Fort Ridgely.

"He is a friend of yours, is he?" asked the General.

"Yes, sir, he is," answered Al.

"He ought to be all right, then," the General said. He scribbled something on the paper pad he always carried in his pocket, folded the sheet and handed it to Al.

"Take that to Colonel Thomas," said he.

Al obeyed joyfully, for he suspected, as proved to be the case, that the paper was an order to Colonel Thomas to detach Wallace from his regiment for orderly service with the commanding general. Wallace was promptly instructed to fall out from the ranks of his company, where he was marching, and he and Al were soon riding forward to join General Sully, who, as usual, was near the head of the column.

"It was certainly very kind of you to think of me, Al," said Wallace, "and I appreciate it."

"Perhaps you won't feel so grateful after a while," returned Al, with a laugh. "It may be that

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when we strike the Indians you will have to get into some dangerous places in carrying orders."

"That 's all right; so much the better chance for promotion," declared Wallace, lightly. "Besides, I 'm sure that service at headquarters must be much more interesting and pleasant than it is in the ranks, where one has to march all day in one place, and sleep and eat and wash and brush his teeth and almost breathe, by word of command."

"Yes, I think you will find it more pleasant in that way," agreed Al. "All you need do is to keep up a neat and soldierly appearance, always be on hand in case you should be wanted, and always obey orders promptly and thoroughly."

The army was now entering regions where it might expect to encounter Indians in heavy force at any time, and General Sully was taking all necessary measures to guard his forces against surprise and also to reconnoitre the country thoroughly for signs of the red foe. The company of Winnebago Indian scouts from Nebraska, and the friendly Sioux employed by General Sully, were constantly spread out far in front and on the flanks of the col-

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umn, scouring the ravines and hills and clumps of timber, while a heavy advance guard preceded the main body on the march. Every night the wagon train was corralled, with its mules herded in the centre. An escort of four hundred men was detailed to remain always with the Montana emigrant train; for the latter, though it usually marched close behind the army, sometimes met with delays because its wagons were very heavily loaded. Major Brown's company of Indian scouts from Minnesota had remained at Fort Rice, under orders to return as speedily as possible to Fort Wadsworth; so that General Sully had none too many scouts with him to properly cover his advance.

One afternoon, camp was made for the night on a level plateau covered with fine grass not far from the bank of the Cannonball and overlooking the lower valley of that stream. Several small buttes, with steep sides and round tops, rose abruptly from the valley close to the river, and between them glimpses could be caught from the camp of the narrow stream beyond, its waters sparkling in the late afternoon sunshine. After a hot day's march the

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river looked very inviting, and Lieutenant Dale proposed to Al that they go down and take a swim, which would also give them a chance to examine more closely the river and the curious rock formations along its banks. Al readily agreed and also obtained permission from the General for Wallace to accompany them.

Mounting their horses, they picked their way down the steep face of the plateau and rode out across the bottom, heading somewhat up stream until they came out on the river bank, where a little rocky beach shelving down into the water seemed to offer a pleasant spot for swimming. A few yards downstream rose the abrupt walls of one of the buttes, which looked as if it had been built up of many thin horizontal layers of sandstone. Its base was fringed with small brush and willow saplings and here and there a choke-cherry tree, well loaded with ripe fruit, of which the party decided to eat their fill when their swim was over. After their horses had drunk greedily of the fresh, sparkling water, their riders tied them among the saplings, threw off their clothes, and in a moment were laugh-

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ing and splashing in the cold, clear stream, which, though too shallow to afford much swimming, was delightfully refreshing. They amused themselves for some minutes in picking up and throwing about the curious pebbles and larger stones, worn perfectly smooth and round by the water, which, owing to their resemblance to cannonballs, had given the stream its name. Presently Wallace waded out nearly to mid-channel,— not an easy feat, for the current was quite strong,— and there he found a hole six or seven feet deep.

"Hello!" he shouted to his companions. "Watch me duck under and see how long I stay down."

Lieutenant Dale and Al stopped motionless to watch him. Wallace crouched down in the water, then sprang erect as high as possible and, jumping forward, disappeared head first into the deeper pool. At the very instant when he turned over in the air his companions were electrified to hear the report of a musket from the base of the butte just below them, and as Wallace went out of sight they saw the bullet kick up a jet of spray apparently not two inches above his back. Wheeling round they

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saw a feather of smoke rise from the bushes at the further end of the butte, and without a word both of them dashed out of the river to the spot where their clothes lay. Each one of the three had his revolver with him, as always, and in less time than it takes to tell it Al and the Lieutenant, stark naked, had their weapons in their hands. Al heard a splash in the river below them. He sprang down to the water's edge and peered through the bushes. Not thirty yards away an Indian was riding his pony into the stream and Al raised his revolver and fired. The pony sunk to its knees and toppled over, flinging its rider into the water, but the warrior was up again in an instant and waded quickly back to the shore, where he disappeared behind the butte. At this moment Wallace rushed up and caught his revolver from its holster.

"He 's back of the butte," cried Lieutenant Dale. "We can head him off. You stay here and watch the river, Smith. Come on, Briscoe."

He and Al hastened off around the landward side of the butte, while Wallace crouched down by the river bank to shoot at the Indian if he should at-

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tempt to cross. As Al and his companion cautiously made their way to a point where they could look down the valley they saw that the wide interval extending from their position to the next detached butte down river was quite open and covered only with short grass, which afforded little or no cover. Nevertheless, even as they looked they saw the Indian run out from the bushes upon the open space and start on a run across it. The Lieutenant and Al both fired at him and the bullets must have come very close, for he immediately veered and ran again into the river. But the hunted warrior had no sooner reached it than they heard the crack of Wallace's revolver, around on the other side of the butte, and a moment later the Indian, evidently despairing of being able to escape alive, walked up on the bank once more with his rifle held aloft in sign of surrender.

Al and the Lieutenant emerged from the bushes and advanced toward him, taking the precaution, however, to keep him covered with their revolvers. Neither of them was struck at the moment by the ridiculous appearance they presented, "clad only

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with revolvers," as Lieutenant Dale expressed it, but they often laughed about it afterward. The Indian, an ugly, low-browed, flat-nosed specimen of his race, came up to them and Lieutenant Dale disarmed him, taking his musket and a knife concealed in his blanket. Then, keeping him ahead of them, they marched him back to the place where Wallace had remained, by the horses. Here they bound his hands with a saddle strap and, after dressing, started back to camp, making the prisoner walk in front of them.

Their appearance created an uproar of excitement, and questions and congratulations poured upon them from every side, but they pushed their way steadily through the crowd until they reached headquarters and presented their prisoner to General Sully. The latter immediately sent for an interpreter, and then began a severe cross-examination of the captive. He proved surly, and his answers were short and most of them plainly false, until the General sharply informed him that he would be hanged immediately if he did not answer fully, and that he would be hanged later if his an-

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swers proved to be untruthful. He then suddenly found his tongue and became a model witness.

According to his statement, he was an Upper Yanktonais, and was simply watching the army as a scout when he saw Lieutenant Dale and his companions go in swimming; and, thinking that he could escape across the river, had decided to try and pick one or more of them off. He admitted that there were many scouts of the hostiles in the vicinity, but said that most of them were held far back from the army by the presence of General Sully's scouts. Asked as to the hostile army and its location, he hesitated, but finally replied that the camps were very great and were in a very strong position on the headwaters of the Knife River, a considerable distance north of the Cannonball. He declared the camps contained so many warriors that the Indians were sure of easily defeating the white army, and proposed to stand and fight before their encampment.

Having extracted all the information from the prisoner which seemed possible, General Sully was

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about to dismiss him with instructions that he be kept under close guard until further orders, when Al stepped up and said in a low tone,

"General, he says he is an Upper Yanktonais. Would you mind asking him whether he knows anything about my brother or about the Indian who holds him?"

"Why, certainly I will," replied the General. "I ought to have thought of that myself."

He held up his hand to the interpreter, who was retiring, and then, fixing his eyes on the captive, asked,

"Do you know a member of your tribe named Te-o-kun-ko?"

The interpreter translated the question into Sioux. The prisoner remained stolidly silent a moment, then answered in the low, guttural tone he had used all through the interview,

"Tush."

"He says, 'yes,' " said the interpreter.

Al started. Was some real news coming at last?

"Is he in your camps now?" pursued the General.

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"Tush," replied the savage.

"Has Te-o-kun-ko a white boy prisoner with him?" the General went on.

As soon as the question was interpreted, the Indian shot one swift glance at the faces of the General and those around him, then his eyes half closed again to their former expression of passive indifference.

"Nea," he replied.

"He says, 'no,' " interjected the interpreter.

"No?" exclaimed Sully. "You know that he has had such a prisoner, don't you?"

"Tush."

"Well, where is he now?"

"I don't know," the Indian answered.

The General thought a moment. Then he inquired,

"How long has Te-o-kun-ko been in the camp?"

The prisoner made quite a lengthy reply and the interpreter struggled a moment arranging it into English speech.

"He says, 'He has been in camp only a few days. I saw him just before I came out to scout.' "

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"Where did he come from?"

"He came from the south."

"But where in the south?"

Again the reply was long and was translated,

"I don't know. I did n't talk with him, but some one told me he came from the south."

"When did you see Te-o-kun-ko last,— that is, previous to his coming into the big camp?" the General inquired.

"I saw him two moons ago on the Assouri River, in the country of the Hudson's Bay Company."

"Did he have the white child with him then?"

"Tush."

"But you are sure he has not the white child with him now?"

"No, he has not."

"Well, that will do," said General Sully, rising from his camp-stool. "We can't get any more out of him. He 's probably lying, anyway," he added, turning to Al. "He does n't want us to think they have any white prisoners. My belief is that your brother is undoubtedly there."

Al tried to believe so too, but the interview, nev-

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ertheless, made him feel uneasy and depressed. He had known little about his brother's whereabouts and condition before, but now, if the Indian's statements were true, he knew less than ever. The search seemed to become more vague and hopeless the further he pursued it and he began almost to despair of ever seeing Tommy again. Had it not been for the many duties he had to perform and the increasing interest in events before them as they approached nearer to the hostile army, he would have lost heart altogether. But matters crowding fast upon each other forced him largely to forget himself and his private problems.

The second day out from Fort Rice the column passed a deserted Indian camp which had evidently been abandoned only recently, and on succeeding days several similar ones were found. It was clear that they could not be far from the enemy's stronghold; and on July 23, General Sully, owing to the statements made by the Indian whom the boys had captured and other information received from his scouts, left the Cannonball and turned north toward Heart River, which the army reached next day.

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The scouts went out in every direction and on the twenty-sixth unexpectedly encountered a hostile war party of half a hundred braves, who fled north toward the Knife River.

General Sully, being now convinced that the enemy's camp must be within a comparatively short distance, decided to make a forced march on the trail of the war party, and preparations were quickly begun. The main wagon train, as well as the Montana emigrant train, was securely corralled in a good camping place by the Heart River and a sufficient guard to protect them was detailed to remain behind, under Captain William Tripp, Company B, Dakota Cavalry. Sufficient rations were cooked to last the troops in the field for six days, the General intending to carry all supplies on pack mules taken from the train. Nothing but absolutely necessary food and ammunition was to be carried, all articles such as tents and company mess kits being left behind. But when the boxes containing the pack saddles were opened it was found, to every one's dismay, that the cincha straps of the saddles, by which they were to be secured to the

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mules' backs, were made of leather, about three inches wide, instead of canvas or webbing six or eight inches wide, as they should have been. When the men tried to tighten up these leather straps, they cut so cruelly into the flesh of the mules that the latter began kicking and bucking frantically and could not be quieted until they had rid themselves of their loads. General Sully, very much disgusted, was obliged to give up the plan of using a pack train, though it would have been much the easiest and quickest way to carry supplies in the rough country. Instead, he impressed into service about thirty-five of the lightest private wagons in the train, belonging to sutlers and to different companies among the troops, which had them for carrying their tents and private belongings. Each of these wagons was loaded with about one thousand pounds of food or small arms ammunition. Each soldier was supplied with all the cartridges he could carry on his person, and the limber chests of the batteries were filled with artillery ammunition.

Thus equipped, the fighting forces were ready to

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start at three o'clock in the afternoon. The bugles blew "mount," the soldiers, teamsters, and emigrants who were being left behind cheered and waved their hats, and in a little while the long column had wound out of sight among the hills and ravines, headed north toward the Knife River.

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CHAPTER XII

THE BATTLE OF TAHKAHOKUTY

AS the troops pressed onward the marching became harder. They were nearing the hill country lying between the Knife and the Little Missouri, full of precipices and deep ravines. That night they camped in the hills, with pickets and camp guards out. Each man slept with his sabre and revolver buckled to his waist and the bridle of his saddled horse in his hand. The next night they camped on the Knife River under similar conditions, after a hard march of twenty-seven miles, and as no fires were allowed, the weary men sorely missed their strong, hot coffee. As soon as he could do so, Al rolled himself in his blanket and stretched out on the ground. It seemed to him that he had but just closed his eyes when he heard the bugles ringing out reveille in the chill darkness. He sat up and rubbed his eyes, hearing a confusion of voices

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around him, the trampling of horses and jingle of accoutrements. Then he felt Cottontail's nose push against his cheek and, slowly unbending his stiffened limbs, he rose to his feet.

"Well, old boy," said he, putting his arm around his horse's neck, "I wonder what 's in store for us to-day?"

"Plenty, probably," said Lieutenant Dale's voice, close beside him. "I 've an idea we 'll strike the redskins to-day."

It was three o'clock, and in the black darkness the lines were formed, not by sight but by hearing. For an hour they stumbled onward through the darkness before the first streaks of dawn began to give the men vague glimpses of their comrades and of other objects around. A little after sunrise a halt was made on a small branch of the Knife River for a quick breakfast of hardtack and coffee, and then the army pushed on again. The hour approached noon and the sun beat down hot on the long columns of horsemen toiling over the hills on each side of the small train of wagons and artillery.

General Sully, with one or two officers, was riding

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in an ambulance at the head of the train and others were on their horses near by, Al being with them, when they saw a party of several of the Indian scouts come galloping back through the advance guard. They did not slacken pace until they reached the General's ambulance, when their leader, much excited, began gesticulating and talking rapidly in his own tongue.

"Halt the advance guard! Tell Colonel Pollock to halt the First Brigade! Tell Colonel Thomas to halt his brigade!" cried the General to three different orderlies, who dashed away in as many different directions.

The moving columns became stationary, every eye turning in excited speculation on the General's ambulance, toward which the field officers of the different organizations were galloping from every direction. They found the staff eagerly gathered around the interpreter, who, catching the words from the lips of the chief scout, repeated to the General,

"He says, 'We have found the hostiles. They are just ahead, in great numbers, waiting us. We have

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seen their camps. They are in big hills a few miles from here. It is a very strong place.' "

"How far are the Indians ahead?" asked the General.

"A mile, maybe two miles. They keep moving."

"Gentlemen," said the General, turning to the field officers around him, "the enemy is found. Return to your commands and prepare for action. I will send you orders for battle formation in a few moments."

The officers went flying back to their regiments, and as they reached them and gave the stirring news to their men, volleys of cheers broke forth and went rolling up and down the long lines. There could be no doubt of the anxiety of the troops to come to blows with the foe they had been so long hunting. The men dismounted and began tightening up saddle cinchas and sabre belts, arranging their ammunition conveniently and giving a last inspection to carbines, sabres, and revolvers, all the while keeping up an energetic buzz of conversation.

In a few moments orderlies and staff officers began to fly along the lines with oral or written or-

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ders. Al went galloping over to Colonel Pattee with instructions to dismount his battalion of the Seventh Iowa and deploy it forward into line of battle on the left of the Sixth Iowa, of which six dismounted companies were already deploying on the right wing. Lieutenant Dale carried word to Colonel Rogers to deploy six companies of the Eighth Minnesota forward by the right, thus forming the left wing. Another officer instructed Captain Pope to throw his battery into the interval between the Seventh Iowa and the Eighth Minnesota; while Wallace Smith was intrusted with the order to Major Brackett to close in column upon the right flank, in rear of the Sixth Iowa, to cover the train and to be prepared to charge when ordered. Of the remaining commands, the Second Minnesota was formed on the left flank, in rear of the Eighth Minnesota; the Dakota Cavalry and a company of the Sixth Iowa were placed as supports for Pope's battery; Jones's battery was held in reserve with an escort of four companies of the Sixth Iowa; the wagon train was massed and closed up on the artillery reserve; and behind the train was placed a rear guard of two

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companies of the Eighth and one of the Second Minnesota. Several companies of skirmishers ran out and deployed in front of the main line of battle; and then the General, surveying his dispositions and finding them complete, gave the order to advance.

With flags and guidons flaunting proudly in the breeze, the sunlight dancing on sabre scabbards and carbine barrels, men cheering and horses prancing under the impulse of excitement on all sides of the great martial square, the army rolled forward across the swelling, verdant hills, a huge living engine of destruction moving onward to crush, or to be crushed by, the barbaric host in its front. Al, riding in the centre, behind the General, looked around him with flashing eyes, for never before had he viewed so inspiring and majestic a scene. It was, in fact, by far the largest and best appointed army which ever went into battle against the hordes of the great Sioux Nation, not even excepting the columns that followed Terry and Crook and Gibbon twelve years later when, in 1876, the gallant Custer and five troops of the Seventh United States Cavalry lost their lives

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in the battle of the Little Big Horn. More than twenty-two hundred men were in battle formation on that twenty-eighth day of July, 1864. As Wallace Smith exclaimed to Al, riding along beside him,

"By George, Al, is n't this a sight worth seeing and worth remembering, too? I 'm glad I 'm here."

"See!" cried Al, too startled to reply, suddenly pointing ahead. "There they are!"

Over the crest of a hill which the skirmish line was ascending, a dense, confused mass of mounted warriors came pouring like a torrent. Farther and farther to the right and left its flanks spread with lightning rapidity, breaking over the hill as an ocean roller curls and breaks upon a beach; farther and farther, till it stretched far beyond the utmost extremes of the line of battle. The hundreds of ponies were running at topmost speed, heads down and necks outstretched, the ground shaking beneath their thundering hoof-beats; the hundreds of warriors were brandishing guns and revolvers and plumed lances above their heads, their many-colored war bonnets streaming behind them in the

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hurricane of the charge, their voices upraised in a tempest of terrific, blood-curdling yells. So the savage host came on, straight for the thin thread of skirmishers and the solid line of battle behind it, as if they would sweep over them both and engulf the whole army at once in utter destruction. It seemed that nothing could stand before them, and they towered above the skirmish line like a wall.

Wallace clutched Al's arm, exclaiming, hoarsely, "My God, what will the skirmishers do?"

"Watch them! Watch them!" answered Al, his whole mind centred on the impending collision.

The skirmish line came to a halt. Here and there it receded a little, then swung forward again, like a rope whipping back and forth. At one point and then at another a white puff of smoke spurted out, and in an instant they rippled all along the line, plain to the eye even before the spattering pop of the carbines reached the ear. It seemed a puny challenge to be flung in the face of that imposing mass of horsemen, but it was enough. They checked in their ponies, broke into fragments and either gal-

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loped back as they had come or else swung off to right and left and, running along in front of the line of battle, swept away beyond its flanks.

Al's pulses were pounding with excitement as he glanced at the General, riding now on his horse. Sully's face was as calm as if he were reviewing a dress parade. He stroked his beard slowly as he looked at the skirmish line and remarked,

"That was well done." Then, turning to one of his aides, he said, in his usual tone, "Tell Colonel Rogers to incline a little more to the left. He is crowding Pope's battery."

On up the hill just vacated by the Indians moved the main body of the army and down into the valley in front of it hurried the skirmishers. As the General and his staff reached the crest, a wonderful scene lay spread before them. It was a great plain, much cut up by ravines and hillocks but appearing from their position to be almost level, and it extended from the hill they were on to the base of another range, several miles away, which rose sheer from the valley in a mighty mass of abrupt ridges and rocky peaks from four hundred to eight

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hundred feet high. It was Tahkahokuty, or Kill-deer, Mountain. From base to summit it was covered with brush and timber; and among the trees on its top as well as on the low ridge along its base could be seen hundreds upon hundreds of Indian lodges, the women and children, the horses and dogs, running about among them, mere specks in the distance. To the left of the advancing army, a sharp upheaval of hills fell away from the flank of Tahkahokuty, lower than the main ridge but still formidable; and in front of this, in front of the mountain itself and of the camps at its base and extending far away to the right, the plain was covered with thousands of mounted warriors, some scattered and some in masses, but nearly all of them in rapid motion toward the small, compact army marching steadily forward upon their stronghold.

Again and again as the line of battle pressed on, the masses of warriors hurled themselves upon its front, only to break and retire before the deadly fire poured into them. But ever farther the red horsemen overlapped the flanks; in spite of the fact

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that the line of battle was being constantly extended to meet them. The soldiers, parched with the heat of the day and the exertion of marching and fighting over the rough ground, often at the double-quick, were suffering with thirst, but no water was to be found. As the army approached nearer and nearer to Tahkahokuty, the Indians began to fight with more stubbornness. They galloped up close to the lines, halted and fired, then dashed away again. Now and then a soldier fell and was lifted by some of his comrades and carried back to an ambulance.

At length two great masses of Indians began gathering, one out beyond the left flank, the other, beyond the right, and both near the front of the camps along the mountain's base. General Sully, as calm as ever, surveyed them deliberately through his glasses. Then suddenly he lowered his hand, straightened up in his saddle and spoke to an aide with a ring in his voice which had not been there before. The decisive moment had come. Pointing a steady finger at the crowd of Indians on the right, he cried,

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"Tell Major Brackett to charge those fellows with the sabre! Tell him to drive it home; clear the valley and force them up the ridge."

Like a flash he turned to another officer and, pointing to the mass on the left, said,

"Order Colonel McLaren to charge that party and drive them to the ridge, and not to stop till he has forced them clear away from their camps."

Once more his words flashed out like a whip-lash, and Wallace Smith, quivering to be off, caught them as they came from his lips,

"Tell Captain Pope to advance at a gallop through the skirmish line and give them shell. Tell him to clear the valley and sweep the ridge in front of Brackett and McLaren."

Wallace dashed away and the General relapsed into his former attitude of silent, intent watchfulness. All his officers and orderlies were now gone somewhere with orders, excepting Al and Lieutenant Dale, who still rode behind him. But he paid no more heed to them than to the grass under his horse's feet. His whole attention was concentrated on the great game he was playing with liv-

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ing men for pawns, as the skilful chess player centres his thought upon the board before him at the crisis of the game.

Far to the right and left fronts, beginning in a low rumble and rising rapidly to a steady, pounding thunder above the crackle of the musketry, sounded the hoof-beats of McLaren's and Brackett's squadrons as they passed from the trot to the gallop and from the gallop to the charge and, a forest of flashing sabres circling above their heads, bore down with fierce cheers upon the foe. Straight ahead, through the gap in the battle line, could be seen the guns of the Prairie Battery, going forward, the cannoneers clinging to the limbers, the cavalry escort galloping furiously on either side. A moment more, and the boom of a howitzer rose above the lesser noises of battle, followed by another and another, and the shells, circling high, burst like great, white flowers against the rugged, dark green front of Tahkahokuty. A terrified commotion could be seen among the people in the camps on its crest. Here and there fires

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burst out among the lodges and smoke began to pour aloft through the foliage.

> "'But see! Look up! On Flodden bent
> The Scottish foe has fired his tent!'"

quoted Lieutenant Dale, pointing upward, and Al, catching the inspiration of the great poet of border warfare, who had thrilled him since childhood, went on,

> "'And sudden, as he spoke,
> From the sharp ridges of the hill
> All downward to the banks of Till
> Was wreathed in sable smoke!'"

Before the resistless rush of the Minnesotans, the savages on either flank broke and fled wildly back to the higher ground, the cavalry hard on their heels. Here, backed literally against their camps, they turned amid the rocks and trees and ravines, like wolves at bay, to protect for a few minutes the squaws and children, who were frantically striking the tepees and running or driving their travois up the ravines and into the impenetrable

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mountain fastnesses beyond. Farther and still farther along the crest of the lower ridge puffed out the little, cotton-like jets of carbine and rifle smoke. At length, nearly at the foot of the mountain on the right they began to increase in rapidity until they were floating off in a mass of thin vapors, while the sound of the fire became a shrill, continuous rattle. Above it rose the yells of the Indians, answered now and then by a disjointed cheer. General Sully's eyes narrowed, and his jaws set hard.

"Brackett 's struck a hornet's nest," he ejaculated. "By George, that begins to sound like Fair Oaks!"

He wheeled his horse and galloped back to Captain Jones, whose battery was a short distance behind him.

"Captain," he cried, pointing to the spot where the heaviest fight seemed to be raging, "get out there as quick as the Lord 'll let you, close to the base of the mountain, and shell out those redskins in front of Brackett."

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The Captain saluted and spurred his horse around to the flank of his command.

"On right sections;—to twenty-five yards, extend intervals;—" he shouted. "Trot;—march!" Then, as the battery resolved itself into the new formation, he continued, "Right oblique,—march! Trot! Gallop!"

The guns went racing away, swung into battery, and in a moment their shells were searching the ravines in Brackett's front. They had scarcely opened when a great hubbub and popping of carbines broke out behind the wagon train, and a large body of Indians made their appearance, as if springing out of the ground, and bore down upon the rear guard. Immediately one of Jones' guns limbered up and came galloping back to reinforce the hard-pressed companies covering the train.

At this moment the General raised his glasses with a frown and looked toward the bluffs where McLaren was advancing, then swept his glasses around to Pope's battery and the Dakota Cavalry, which had charged ahead of the guns and become

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heavily engaged among the rocks in a ravine running back through the centre of the enemy's lower camps. The General turned to Lieutenant Dale.

"Warn Pope not to fire so far to the left," he said. "He 's endangering McLaren's advance."

Then he called to Al,

"Ride up there to those Coyotes and scouts and tell Miner not to push too far ahead of the flanks. He 'll be surrounded."

The two couriers galloped off together, leaving the General for the moment alone. As they pushed through the gap in the centre of the main battle line, Lieutenant Dale exclaimed,

"Don't these fellows fight splendidly considering most of them have never been under fire before?" Then he laughed. "Look at Pattee over there! His coat 's off and he 's fanning himself with his hat. It 's a hot day for a fat man to fight."

The line of sweating, panting soldiers, closely followed by their comrades who were holding the horses, was plodding steadily ahead, firing at intervals upon the scattered warriors still circling in their front, as yet unrouted by the movements

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which had swept back their extreme flanks. Having passed the line of battle and the skirmishers ahead of it, the Lieutenant changed his course toward the left, where Pope's men were working methodically around their guns, while Al galloped straight on. He passed a small, detached butte from whose crest the shells of Pope's guns had just driven a crowd of squaws and children who were watching the battle from that elevation. He encountered no warriors, though some were so near that he drew his revolver before entering the rocky, timbered mouth of the ravine where the Coyotes were engaged.

Few soldiers were to be seen at first, but sounds were arising from among the rocks resembling those of a small volcano in eruption, and as Al pushed on into the broken ground he began to meet here and there troopers of the Dakota Cavalry, each holding four or more horses of the men on the firing line, which was still farther ahead. He soon found that he could not continue mounted, so, hooking up the sabre he had worn ever since leaving Fort Rice, he dropped Cottontail's reins over his head

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and hurried forward on foot, stumbling over roots and dodging rocks, in search of Captain Miner. Bullets and occasionally arrows whistled by him and the yells of the Indians seemed not fifty feet away. In a moment he came upon Corporal Wright and two men of his squad, crouching behind a broad rock and firing whenever they saw a target. Just as Al reached them the Corporal cried to his men,

"Now!"

They leaped from their concealment and ran forward with a shout to another rock, some thirty feet ahead, while four Indians, who had been hidden on its further side, jumped back and bolted for other cover higher up the ravine. The troopers fired and one warrior fell, but was snatched up by his companions and dragged along. Al followed the soldiers and cried in the Corporal's ear,

"Charlie, where is Captain Miner?"

"Captain Miner?" said Wright. "I don't know. He 's somewhere around but we 're all scattered out here."

Al could see other soldiers behind trees and rocks off to the right across the ravine, and, dodging from

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one cover to another, he started in that direction. After going a few yards he nearly fell over a man lying flat on the ground, peering ahead around the corner of a stone with his cocked carbine at his shoulder.

"Hi, Wallace!" exclaimed Al. "What are you doing here? Why don't you go back to the General?"

Wallace shot a resentful glance at him.

"How can I go back?" he asked. "We 're cut off. There 's redskins all along the rear."

"But I just came through," objected Al.

"Oh, don't bother me!" cried Wallace, impatiently, quite beside himself with the fascination of the struggle. "Can't you let a fellow alone? There!"

At the last word his carbine cracked and an Indian, his arm dangling at his side, darted away from a tree ahead. Wallace sprang up and followed, taking possession of the nearer side of the tree.

"Say, Wallace, where 's Captain Miner?" shouted Al after him.

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"Aw, how do I know?" replied Wallace, without looking around. Then he added, "Oh, yes; he was just over there a minute ago." He jerked his head vaguely to the right.

Al went on and almost immediately encountered the Captain, accompanied by eight or ten men, in a little gully where they had stopped to breathe. Though panting and soaked with perspiration, the men were firing up at the rocks above them but, at the moment when Al arrived, the Captain's revolver lay on the ground at his feet and his drawn sabre was thrust under one arm while he was picking with his right thumb and forefinger at a tiny splinter in the palm of his left hand. His face wore an absorbed expression and he moved his head slowly from side to side as he worked. He seemed entirely unconscious that anything was happening around him.

"Captain Miner," said Al, hardly able to repress a laugh as he saluted, "General Sully says for you not to get too far ahead of the flanks. He is afraid you will be surrounded."

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The Captain looked up at him with a glance of pathetic helplessness.

"Why, my boy," said he, "how can I help it? We are already surrounded. We must keep going ahead or we shall be cleaned out. I 'm sorry. I wish the General understood the situation."

Having extracted the splinter, he picked up his revolver again, stepped to a rock and peered around it.

"They seem to be afraid to go out of there, don't they?" he said to his men, thoughtfully, after a moment's inspection of the enemy's position. "I believe perhaps we 'd better drive them. Yes, let 's do that. Come on, boys. Charge!"

The soldiers gave a yell and scrambled out of the gully, Al with them, and the Captain climbing and jumping over the rocks just ahead. On either side of them other men of the Coyotes sprang up to join the advance; and farther to the right, up the side of the ravine, the Winnebago scouts of Captain Stufft, and Captain Williams's company of the Sixth Iowa, surged forward also. A hundred or

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more Indians sprang away from their hiding-places beyond and hurried higher up the ravine, some of them pausing to fire at their pursuers.

Al, being strong and quick, was soon abreast of the Captain. He was just pulling himself up on hands and knees over a ledge when he saw a tall, broad-shouldered Indian step into view from behind a rock not thirty feet ahead and raise his rifle to fire. As he stood, his left side was turned slightly toward Al, and what the latter saw as he looked made him gasp as though he had been struck in the face. A long, livid scar ran down the cheek and neck of the savage and out upon his shoulder.

For an instant Al's head swam, as he realized that before him stood Te-o-kun-ko, the captor of his brother Tommy. Then, with no thought in his mind other than that he must catch up with the Yanktonais and demand his brother, he began running and climbing ahead again with frantic energy. The Indian had fired and disappeared; but to Al's excited imagination it seemed almost as if in overtaking him he would overtake Tommy himself. He paid no heed to Captain Miner and his men nor

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He was just pulling himself up

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to Wallace Smith, who had joined them, all of whom were shouting to him to come back. He leaped over the rock where Te-o-kun-ko had stood but the warrior was not in sight. He ran up a little, steep depression beyond and swung around a tree-trunk at its head. An Indian behind a stone a few feet to one side, who had not noticed him so far in front of the line, gave him a terrified glance and fled like a rabbit. Al did not pause to fire at him; but another warrior on his opposite side sent a bullet so close that the wind of it brushed his face sharply, and he stopped long enough to reply with his revolver; whereupon the savage dived between two boulders and vanished. Al rushed on, totally oblivious of the fact that he was getting far within the retreating Indian lines.

Just then, in climbing over a boulder, his foot slipped and he pitched forward and rolled into the narrow crevice between two rocks beyond, where, for a moment, he was held securely, despite his struggles. He twisted himself around in an effort to grasp a point of the stone above him, and found himself staring into the face of Te-o-kun-ko, hardly

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fifteen feet away, looking at him down the barrel of his rifle.

"Te-o-kun-ko! Wait!" shouted Al. "Te-o-kun-ko, where is Tommy,—Tommy Briscoe?"

The tense muscles of the Indian's features relaxed. His finger did not press the trigger which would have forever ended Al's search. Across his face came an expression of intense bewilderment, mixed, it seemed to Al's fascinated gaze, with grief or remorse. The levelled rifle barrel wavered and then sunk. He half turned away, hesitatingly, then looked again at Al with a keen, searching glance, as the latter lay helpless between the rocks. Finally, with a gesture half defiant and half despairing, he made a few quick, cat-like springs across the rocks and disappeared once more.

With a mighty effort Al succeeded in grasping the jutting point of the stone and drew himself up from the crevice. He was none too soon, for two Indians, whom he had distanced in his rapid climb, coming along the slope near him with guns evidently empty, saw him and leaped at him with clubbed

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muskets. He fired his revolver at one of them and missed, then jerked out his sabre and swung it in a left parry just in time to save his head from the blow of a musket butt. Three more warriors coming behind and afraid to shoot lest they hit their friends, came bounding down to join the hand-to-hand struggle.

In a few seconds more all would have been over but at this crucial instant the four men leading the wild scramble of the Coyotes after Al, caught up with him. They were Wallace, and Troopers Will Van Osdel, Lank Hoyt, and George Pike. Van Osdel leaped in beside Al, his sabre knocking the gun clear from the hands of one of the Indians, Hoyt crouched and fired his carbine at another, who sunk to the ground with a grunt, and Pike and Wallace, giving as loud a shout as they had breath for, climbed on after the remaining warriors, who had taken to their heels.

No sooner had the Indians fled than Van Osdel turned on Al.

"You crazy jack-rabbit," he cried, "what are you

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trying to do? Have you gone plumb out of your head? It 's the biggest wonder ever happened you 're not dead."

"I saw the Indian that captured my brother," returned Al, dejectedly. "But he 's gone now."

"Well," interjected Hoyt, mopping his streaming face, "he came near getting two brothers, instead of one. Anyhow, you 've led a lovely charge. We 've nearly cleared the ravine."

They looked ahead. It was true. The crest of the mountain was towering above them through the trees and they were actually ascending its base, for, though Al's foolhardy pursuit of Te-o-kun-ko had taken hardly five minutes from the time he started until he was overtaken by his comrades, he had climbed so fast and so far that the Dakota and Iowa Cavalry and the Indian scouts, in following him had penetrated clear through the Sioux camps lying above the ravine on either side.

His right senses came back to Al the moment he realized that he had failed in his purpose of capturing or killing Te-o-kun-ko, and he knew that he ought to return at once to General Sully. But he

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could not resist the temptation to go on now to the top of the ravine and see what was there, and he had, moreover, a lingering hope of catching another sight of Te-o-kun-ko. The stragglers of the cavalry were now closing up on those who had gained the advance, and, the Indians having practically given up the contest, a few moments of hard climbing brought them to the top of the ravine.

An astonishing sight met their eyes. As far as they could see over the sloping ridge, the ground was covered with a city of lodges. A few had been struck and dragged away for a distance, but most of them were still standing, though deserted. Over at the farther side of the camp could be seen the last of the squaws and children, flying into the bewildering maze of ravines leading up the rugged face of Tahkahokuty, protected by the scattered fire of the warriors who had just been routed by the cavalry. Off to the right and left, where the shells of Jones and Pope had but just ceased to burst, the little group of soldiers could see the columns of Brackett and McLaren pouring with exultant shouts into other parts of the immense, abandoned Sioux

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camps, while, in their own rear, the main line of battle was approaching up the ridge. Though the mountain had not yet been ascended, plainly the field itself had been completely conquered, and the battle of Tahkahokuty Mountain, the greatest and most picturesque conflict of the American Northwest, had become a part of history. Al and Wallace, tardily recollecting their duties, made haste in descending the ravine to find their horses and return to General Sully, with such explanations as they could devise for their long absence while carrying orders to the firing line.

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CHAPTER XIII

BESET IN THE BAD LANDS

ON regaining the prairie, the boys found that General Sully had already gone up to the Sioux camps at one side of the ravine by which they had ascended. They at once followed, passing the artillery and the wagon train on the way. When they arrived they found most of the army already assembling on the farther side of the hostile camps, at the base of Tahkahokuty. Far up on the top of the mountain a number of Indians had gathered and were firing upon the troops at very long range. Although the soldiers were very much exhausted by their efforts of the afternoon and were sorely in need of food and rest, it was evident that these annoying neighbors must be dispersed before nightfall. Moreover, it was known that good water was to be found somewhere near the mountain top, at the Falling Spring of Tahkahokuty, as the Indians called the

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spot, and since the troops were suffering for water, an advance was imperative. General Sully inspected the enemy's position, then said to Colonel Thomas, who was with him,

"Colonel, do you think some of the Eighth Minnesota could clear those fellows out and get possession of the spring, if Captain Jones shells ahead of them?"

"They certainly can and will, General," responded Thomas.

"Four companies ought to be enough," continued Sully. "The rest of the troops can be having mess while they are gone."

"I will instruct Major Camp to make the advance," replied the Colonel, riding away.

Al stepped to the General's side.

"May I have permission to accompany Major Camp, General?" he asked. "This afternoon I came face to face with the Indian who has my brother a prisoner,— Te-o-kun-ko,— but he got away. I might possibly see him again up there."

"The Indian who has your brother?" exclaimed the General, much surprised. "How do you know?"

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"By the scar on his cheek and neck and by the way he looked when I called him by name," answered Al.

"Why, in that case, of course you can go," the General replied. "But be careful; he is undoubtedly a desperate fellow. However, it is n't likely you will see him again. Most of them have gotten as far away as they can by this time." Then he added, "By the way, since you are going, watch for a practical path to the top for cavalry and wagons. The army may have to go up there, and I certainly shall to-morrow."

Al mounted Cottontail and rode away. He had hardly reached Major Camp's detachment, which had dismounted and was deploying to the right as skirmishers, when the guns of the Third Minnesota Battery began once more to boom. Their elevating-screws had been run down to the last thread in order that the muzzles might be raised enough to throw their shells upon the overhanging mountain crest. The projectiles carried to their mark, bursting in sprays of pale, orange flame high above the topmost rocks. But they did not entirely dislodge the enemy, and after a few rounds the battery was

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obliged to cease firing owing to the advance of the skirmish line.

Up along the steep, boulder-strewn breast of Tahkahokuty, through timber and underbrush, went the thin, irregular line, eagerly watched by the troops below and but feebly opposed by the warriors above. It was hard climbing, and more than once Al and others in the detachment stumbled and fell over stones or tree roots. As they neared the top and came into clear view from the crest, the fire of the Indians increased in intensity, though the savages continued to shoot high so that very few of the soldiers suffered. At length the cavalrymen scrambled over the last ledge, too breathless to shout in response to the hearty cheers of their comrades far below, but not too breathless to follow on a run after the Sioux who had been bold enough to await their coming and still showed fight around the ravine of the Falling Spring. The struggle was sharp and decisive but it lasted only for a moment. A few carbines and sabres clashed with lances and muskets, then the rear guard of the Sioux, unable, as always, to stand the test of

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hand-to-hand conflict, broke for the nearest cover behind them and disappeared in the tumbled wilderness of mountains beyond, whither their families and the bulk of their army had already gone.

Some deserted lodges stood around the triumphant Minnesotans on the lofty eminence, but they were few in number compared to those in the vast camp below. Al saw nothing of Te-o-kun-ko in the handful of warriors who fled before them; and while the men were filling their canteens at the spring of cool, crystal water which burst from the rocks near at hand, he walked along the crest of the ridge, looking for a less abrupt ascent than the one they had followed. From his position, the view spread before him in the golden glow of early twilight was magnificent. Far below and seemingly almost at his feet, lay the bivouac of the army. He could see the soldiers moving about, some of them still tossing their hats in enthusiasm over the success of the charge. They looked like pygmies, and the sound of their cheers came up to him faint and far away. Farther out from the ridge lay the myriad dots of the Sioux lodges, and beyond them, ex-

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tending for miles upon miles until lost in the haze of the horizon, stretched the countless rough ranges of hills over which the army had passed in the morning. The treeless expanse of crests and slopes, lying like a tumbled green counterpane in the distance, was now as still and peaceful as if it had never known the turmoil of battle or the trample of armed men.

At length Al retraced his steps and joined Major Camp, whose men were now ready to descend to the main body, with the exception of a strong picket left to hold and patrol the mountain top. Once more back at headquarters, Al was not long in finishing his supper and rolling himself in his blanket. But, though weary with the exertions and excitement through which he had passed since daybreak, he lay for a while thinking over the events of the past nine hours, while one by one the sounds of the camp died away around him, and the soldiers lay down to rest. Most of his thoughts were naturally of his encounter with Te-o-kun-ko and the mystifying conduct of the latter. Why had the Yanktonais failed to shoot him when he lay

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there between the rocks, utterly helpless? It would have been the most natural thing in the world for an Indian to do, for they seldom show mercy, especially in the heat of battle. Why had that strange, bewildered expression come over the Indian's face when Al called him by name? And, most perplexing of all, where was Tommy now? Among the women and children who had fled away before the army could overtake them, or in some distant, secluded place where Te-o-kun-ko had left him for safe-keeping? All these questions were utterly baffling; no amount of thinking could bring a satisfactory answer to a single one of them; and at length Al, weary in body and mind, sunk into the dreamless slumber which had already enveloped his comrades on every side.

The bugles were blaring out the reveille long before daylight next morning, and in a short time the army had eaten its breakfast, formed in column and was marching away by the left flank along the base of Tahkahokuty, seeking a passage around or through the mountain into the country beyond, whither the enemy had fled. General Sully himself

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went straight up to the crest by a pathway which had been discovered by Al and others the previous evening, but what he saw there was extremely discouraging. As far as the eye could look to the northward the country was intersected by precipitous hills and steep ravines, some of the latter one hundred feet deep, entirely impracticable for either cavalry or wagons. The army marched for six or seven miles along the foot of the mountain without finding a route by which it could be ascended or turned, and at last the General, bearing in mind that he had rations left for only two more days, reluctantly gave the order to halt and countermarch to the abandoned Sioux camps, in order that these might be destroyed before the army returned to Heart River.

Large detachments from the Second and Eighth Minnesota, the Sixth Iowa, and the Dakota Cavalry were at once detailed as fatigue parties and placed under command of Colonel McLaren to collect and burn the lodge poles and lodge skins, the vast accumulations of dried buffalo meat and dried berries,—food which, though great in quantity, was utterly

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unfit for white men,— the tanned robes, clothing, cooking utensils, saddles, travois poles, and countless other articles left in the camps and the near-by ravines. Thirteen companies were engaged in the task, and they spent half a day of hard work at it, when, finding that they would be unable to finish by evening, they set the woods and prairie on fire, and burned the remainder of the captured property in one great conflagration. The poles and coverings of between fourteen and sixteen hundred lodges were destroyed, being the camp equipment, so General Sully estimated, of between five and six thousand warriors and their families. If correct, this meant that at Tahkahokuty the Sioux had assembled a greater army than they ever brought together on any other field, before or since.

A little while after noon the troops began their return march, bivouacking that night about six miles from the battlefield, where they were assailed by a body of Indians about dusk, but repulsed the attack easily. Next day they reached Knife River, and on July 31, by a march of thirty-five miles, regained Captain Tripp's camp on the Heart. They found

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every one there safe and well; but, though no Indians had been seen during the absence of the main column, both the emigrants and the camp guard were exceedingly glad to see the army back again, as it relieved them from their enforced idleness and assured the early renewal of the westward march. While the army was away, Captain Tripp had employed his men in digging a strong line of rifle-pits around the camp, which was now in a condition to withstand the attacks of any number of Indians.

The next two days were spent by the troops in resting themselves and their animals, for all were very weary from the hard marching and fighting of the past week; and by General Sully in trying to determine upon the best route to follow in his further march toward the Yellowstone. Al was absent from headquarters during most of the time, making out commissary requisitions and returns in the wagon train, though once, on the second day, he saw General Sully as the latter passed through the train with Lieutenant Bacon, closely inspecting the contents of each wagon. When, toward evening, he

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returned to headquarters, he at once asked Wallace Smith, who had been there continuously, what had happened during the day.

"Oh, the General seems to be having a lively time deciding what to do," answered Wallace. "It must be a hard question. He had all the Indian and half-breed scouts in here for hours to-day, questioning them about the routes to the Yellowstone. All of them, excepting one, told him they knew nothing of the country due west of us, which must be terribly rough bad lands, from what they say. They declare they have never ventured into it and advised the General to return to the Cannonball and then move west to the mouth of Powder River and down the Yellowstone to where the boats are to meet us. But that means a long, roundabout march of probably two or three weeks; so the General went and inspected the wagons to see if there were supplies enough to make it."

"Yes, I saw him," interrupted Al. "There are just six days' full rations left now."

"That 's what he said when he came back," Wallace continued. "He was a good deal worked up,

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and told the guides they must find a way for the army to march straight west from here across the Little Missouri. But all of them said it was impossible, except one Yanktonais. He declared he had been back and forth across the Bad Lands of the Little Missouri a number of times on hunting expeditions, and he is sure he can lead the army through if some digging is done in the worst places to make a road for the wagons and artillery."

"Just one man?" exclaimed Al. "My gracious! suppose he should lead us into a trap?"

Wallace shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, of course, he might," he agreed. "But what else can be done? There are not rations enough to last over the other route, nor even enough to take us back to Fort Rice. Anyway, the General has decided to trust this chap and make the attempt and we shall start up Heart River to-morrow morning. You know our rations are to be cut down from one-half to one-third, so as to make them last."

"Yes, I know," answered Al. "We were issuing reduced rations this evening. I hope we are not going to run into an ambush," he added. "But

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there is no doubt General Sully knows what he is doing; he always does."

That evening the troops were paraded and heard the General's congratulatory orders on their conduct in the recent battle. Soon after, they retired to rest, and it seemed that but a few moments had passed in this refreshing occupation when reveille called them up to their labors again. The advance guard soon moved out, followed by the military wagon train with strong columns of troops of the Second Brigade on each flank, the First Brigade bringing up the rear. Then with much confusion and shouting, the Montana emigrant train finally got under way and moved out of the intrenched camp, leaving the latter to lie, with parapets slowly crumbling under the rains of summer and the blizzards of winter, an object of curiosity and vague uneasiness to straggling Indians and prowling wolves.

For three days the army pushed steadily westward up the valley of the Heart, through a pleasant country whose hills often showed the outcroppings of large veins of coal. Each night's camp was made in a spot well supplied with water, grass, and wood,

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and the men began to believe that the terrors of the country ahead, so vividly described by the Indian guides, had no existence save in the imaginations of the latter. No hostiles were seen, but the column passed one camp ground, recently abandoned, which showed the sites of several hundred lodges; so no one could doubt that the stealthy enemy was still in the neighborhood and probably watching the progress of the column closely.

Toward evening on August 5, the third day of the march, the advance guard on arriving at the crest of a hill, similar to dozens of other hills they had crossed that day, suddenly came to a halt. The troops behind them could see by their gestures of excitement that they had discovered something unusual ahead. The army and the trains were halted and the General rode forward to the advance guard, accompanied by his staff.

When they reached the crest of the hill and looked out beyond it, not a man spoke for a moment, though at the first glance a few uttered ejaculations of astonishment or dismay and then became silent. Be-

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fore them in the brilliant sunlight and lengthening shadows of late afternoon spread a scene of such weird and desolate grandeur as has few parallels in the world. Six hundred feet below lay the bottom of a vast basin, apparently twenty-five or thirty miles in diameter. From rim to rim it was piled with cones and pyramids of volcanic rock or baked clay and other hills of every imaginable fantastic shape, some of the peaks rising to a level with the surrounding country and some lower, but all glowing with confused and varied color, from gray and yellow to blue and brick red. Over all this huge, extinct oven of what had doubtless been, sometime in ages gone, a great coal bed which had burned out, hardly a sign of vegetation was visible save here and there a few small, straggling cedars or bushes on the barren hillsides. The place resembled strongly the ruins of some mighty, prehistoric city, but more strongly still it reminded the beholder of some of Dante's vivid descriptions of the infernal regions.

They bivouacked that night on the prairie and

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early next morning marched down into the forbidding basin, knowing not whether they would ever emerge from it alive.

All day long in suffocating heat and under the glare of an almost intolerable sun they toiled forward, winding in and out through gorges with high, perpendicular walls and yawning ravines so narrow that only one wagon could pass at a time. No water could be found save a little which was bitter with alkali. A large pioneer party was in advance, grading along hillsides and filling gullies so that the wagons might pass; by nightfall the army had succeeded in covering twelve miles and found itself on the bank of the Little Missouri, where at least water and grass were abundant. But the expedition was literally buried in the Bad Lands, which, on the western side of the stream, still stretched before them in a wilderness of mountains and gorges even more forbidding than those they had already passed. Fortunately no Indians had yet opposed them, and many of the men, especially those in the advance and on the flanks, had found some pleasure mixed with their labor in

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viewing the strange and beautiful rock formations through which they passed. Here were many petrified stumps and fallen trunks of trees on the tops and sides of the hills. Some of them were of immense size and wonderfully preserved, showing the bark, the stumps of branches, and the age rings of the interior wood. At one place was seen what the men called a "petrified sawmill," consisting of what appeared like a pile of lumber and slabs under the edge of a hill and, close by it, a large tree, cut up into logs of exact length, such as might be found around any sawmill, but all of stone as hard as granite. In addition to the trees, many of the men found impressions of leaves in the rocks of sizes and shapes belonging to no vegetation of the present age, while others discovered the footprints of unknown animals which had once inhabited this ancient land.

Colonel Pattee with his detachment of the Seventh Iowa crossed the Little Missouri the following morning to trace out, if possible, with the Yanktonais guide, a route leading westward from the river. He was gone for some hours and, mean-

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while, a few of the men seized the opportunity to take their horses outside the lines in search of better grazing. They had not been out very long when they saw a party of thirty or forty Indians bearing down upon them, intent on cutting them off from camp. The soldiers were too few to think of fighting, so they fled at utmost speed, and all succeeded in getting in, though several escaped very narrowly. The attempted surprise seemed to be the signal of the Indians for the beginning of a general attack on the army, for in a moment the bluffs across the river were swarming with warriors, who opened a hot fire on the camp, though at such long range that their bullets could not reach half the distance. Just after they began firing, a horseman dashed out of the ravine directly beneath their position, which Colonel Pattee's detachment had ascended, and plunging into the river, trotted and galloped his horse across amid a great splashing of water. It was Lieutenant Dale, who had followed Colonel Pattee with an order an hour or two before. General Sully met him at the river bank.

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"What 's the matter?" he demanded, the moment the Lieutenant reached him.

"The Seventh Iowa is attacked back there two or three miles, in the hills," replied Dale. "Colonel Pattee wants reinforcements."

He had scarcely finished speaking when there arose the sound of many hurried hoof beats in the ravine from which he had just emerged. The General looked toward it with a growing smile which presently broke into a laugh as a confused crowd of cavalry rushed from the ravine and galloped furiously down to and through the river.

"The Seventh has evidently come after its own reinforcements, Lieutenant," said he. "They must be in a hurry for them."

"It looks like it," answered Dale, grinning.

He retired, while the leading officer of the frightened cavalry hastily explained to the General that the Indians had come upon them in such a position and in such numbers that the only way they could save themselves was by instant flight.

"Is that so?" asked Al of the Lieutenant, after hearing this explanation.

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"No," returned Dale, laughing, as he dismounted and sat down cross-legged on the ground for a moment's rest. "They were just scared, but it 's no wonder. There are enough redskins around to have made it true. I believe the whole Sioux Nation is out in front of us there. They pretty nearly got me; tumbled a couple of ton rock down when I was coming through that ravine and just missed my horse by about six inches, and they fairly singed my hair with bullets. I guess the ball has started again."

The ball had started again, sure enough, for when the army crossed the river next morning and began threading the succession of ravines and canyons which Colonel Pattee had traced and partially dug out the day before, it was instantly attacked by the Sioux on all sides, in numbers seemingly as great as had fought at Tahkahokuty. On this day detachments from the Second Brigade formed the advance guard, under Major Robert H. Rose, of the Second Minnesota, supported by Jones's battery. The rest of the Second Brigade guarded the army wagon train, with strong flanking parties out on

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each side to hold the hills and transverse valleys from which the enemy might fire upon or charge the train. Behind the Second Brigade came the First, similarly protecting the Montana emigrant train, the Coyotes and two companies of the Sixth Iowa bringing up the rear, while Pope's battery held itself ready to shell the hills or ravines whenever the enemy appeared in sufficient force to justify unlimbering the guns.

The march was slow and fatiguing in the extreme. The Indians, holding the tops and sides of the long succession of narrow passes or canyons through which the army must go, poured their fire down upon the troops until dislodged by the fire of the artillery or the approach of the flankers, when they would fall back to another position of like strength and repeat their tactics. The wagons, after advancing about three miles, were parked in a space where the pass opened to a somewhat greater width; while the troops, pushing on, cleared the hills to allow the fatigue parties to dig out and level some three miles more of road. Then once more the unwieldy train unwound into column and

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crept carefully forward along the trail. The latter, in spite of the efforts of the pioneers, was often so narrow and slanting that it was all several men could do to keep the wagons from overturning and blocking the road permanently. Officers and men were working together on the firing line and among the trains, coatless and dripping with sweat in a temperature of one hundred and ten degrees in the shade. Their throats were parched with thirst, for the water brought from the Little Missouri was soon exhausted, and no more could be obtained throughout the day except at one tiny spring, to which the Indians clung so stubbornly that they were only dislodged by the Second Minnesota after a sharp fight.

Attack after attack was launched on the advance guard; and when repulsed there by the steady volleys of the cavalry carbines and shells of the Third Minnesota Battery, the warriors would concentrate and rush upon one or the other flank, if the ground was open, or else lie in concealment and fire upon it as it approached. Up and down the hills in every direction the braves could be seen, riding their

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nimble-footed ponies along slopes so steep that it seemed even a dismounted man could not keep his footing there.

Toward noon a serious misfortune fell on the army in the loss of the Yanktonais guide, the only man who knew the country through which they were passing. He had proved very faithful to his trust, and in his zeal to lead the march correctly, he had ventured too far to the front, where he was severely wounded in the breast, the bullet coming out under his shoulder blade.

All day long the members of the General's staff were on the run, carrying orders, suggestions or cautions to the commanders of the various organizations, hurrying forward the lagging wagons and sometimes themselves becoming involved in one or another of the many skirmishes constantly blazing up among the tumbled hills. Once Lieutenant Dale rode back to the General's position near the head of the column, with the blood running over his face from a wound in the cheek.

"Oh, are you badly hurt?" asked Al, who happened to be there, startled and anxious.

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"No," the Lieutenant returned, lightly, dabbing some of the blood from his cheek. "I 've been back to the rear guard to tell Captain Miner that the redskins were getting ready to swing around on him. They did, just about as I got there, and stirred him up pretty lively, but the boys repulsed them. One fellow grazed my cheek, that 's all. Just look at them!" His glance swept the surrounding hills, on every one of which groups or masses of Indians were to be seen. "They seem to be everywhere, and for every one killed it looks as though ten new ones sprang out of the ground." He looked at Al and an ominous expression passed over his face. "Have you ever heard of Kabul Pass?" he inquired, in a low tone.

Al returned his glance steadily.

"Yes, I have," he admitted, slowly.

"It looks something like that around here, does n't it?" the Lieutenant continued. "Only one man came out of Kabul Pass alive, you remember."

"Why, you 're right," answered Al, feeling a passing throb of foreboding. "But I think we shall do better than that," he added, hopefully.

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"Oh, no doubt," agreed Dale. "I was just thinking of the similarity of positions, that 's all."

In an instant his mood changed and he laughed at a sudden recollection.

"I saw a funny thing back there," he chuckled. "You know the oxen those emigrants are driving are pretty well fagged out; every now and then one of them lies down and has to be exchanged for a fresh one from the herd. The rear guard has orders to shoot all the exhausted animals, so the Indians won't get them. While I was back there one big ox fell over, and he was unyoked and left on the ground, looking as good as dead. But as the rear guard passed him, he heard their shots and then the yells of the redskins close behind, and he raised his head and looked at the Indians. They were pushing up, hoping to catch him alive. I guess he did n't like their looks, for all at once he scrambled to his feet and made a bolt for the herd, charging right through the rear guard with his tail sticking straight out and his eyes bulging with fright. Now he 's travelling with the rest of the cattle and seems as well as any of them."

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Al laughed heartily. "He ought to have a medal," he declared.

"Yes, he had," agreed Lieutenant Dale, "a leather one, anyway."

A long time after noon, the walls of the canyon through which the column was marching became gradually lower, and after a while the hard-pressed troops and trains found themselves passing out of the dangerous defile upon a comparatively level plateau, higher than most of the surrounding Bad Lands, though it was girt on all sides by the characteristic peaks and gulches of the region. Here General Sully decided to make camp for the night, though he had marched only ten miles, for here had been found a little grass and a large pool of stagnant, muddy rain water, which, however, was better than none at all, and no one could tell whether any existed farther on. The troops were placed in very compact formation and the trains corralled, the emigrants a little to the east of the military camp.

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CHAPTER XIV

TE-O-KUN-KO

AFTER supper had been eaten and rations distributed for the next day, it was nearly sunset, and Al and Wallace sat down on the ground near General Sully's tent to clean their weapons and enjoy a few minutes of welcome rest.

"I never saw anything like that canyon we were in to-day," said Wallace. "More than once I thought we were going to be cleaned out there, and we would have been if we 'd had civilized troops to deal with."

"Why, of course," Al answered. "Civilized troops one-tenth as strong as we could have held it against us for a year. Yet we 've lost only eight or ten men wounded all day. The Indians have n't enough staying qualities, though they have plenty of dash and are magnificent horsemen."

"Yes, that 's true," agreed Wallace. Then

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suddenly he dropped his ram-rod and sprang to his feet. "Look there!" he exclaimed. "Are they going to try some more of their dash this evening, after all they 've done to-day?"

The dry expanse of prairie where the camp lay, sloped gradually up to the eastward, terminating in a ridge at a distance of about a mile from the camp. Over the crest of this ridge a throng of Sioux warriors was now galloping, much as they had come over that other ridge at the opening of the battle of Tahkahokuty. The emigrant camp lay nearest to them, and here a great confusion and panic immediately arose, and women and children began to emerge from the corral and run toward the military camp, shrieking and calling piteously for help. Without waiting for orders scores of soldiers seized their weapons and rushed out across the prairie toward the fugitives, many of whom, as soon as they were within the lines, fell to the ground exhausted or weeping hysterically. The soldiers, once started, continued their advance on the enemy, the swiftest runners distancing the rest. The Indians halted and fired, then seeing that

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their antagonists were not checked, began sullenly to retire, not even hastening much from the shells of the cannon, which had opened along the eastern edge of the camp. So the retreat and pursuit continued to the crest of the ridge, where the Indians went out of sight into the Bad Lands just beyond.

Al and Wallace, who had run out at the first alarm, presently found themselves, in company with one of the Sioux guides and a couple of soldiers of the Sixth Iowa, on the edge of the ridge with a deep, narrow valley before them, bounded on its farther side by four hillocks, or small buttes, shaped like sugar loaves and each separated from the next by crooked gullies, washed deep by rains. At the left end of this series of buttes lay a long, open space, entirely bare of vegetation, apparently extending around behind them. Not an Indian was in sight, but Wallace suggested,

"I believe some of the redskins are hiding behind those buttes. Let 's surprise them. I 'll tell you what we can do. You fellows," he addressed the two cavalrymen, "stay here and the rest of us will go back a little way and then sneak around

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and down across that open space and get in behind the flank of the buttes. If there are any Indians there, we can shoot them before they can get away."

"But there may be a lot of them," objected one of the troopers, "and they 'll clean you out."

"No," declared Wallace, with conviction. "It 's only a little way across, and if there are too many of them we can run back while you cover us with your fire. Besides, lots of the boys are near by."

This was true; a number of soldiers were still a short distance back on the plateau.

"What do you think of it?" asked Al, turning to the Sioux guide, who happened to be one who could speak English, as well as his own tongue.

" Good," said the Indian. "I go."

"Come on, then," urged Wallace, who seemed determined to have an adventure if possible.

Followed by Al and the guide he walked back across the prairie until the ridge hid them from view of any watchers who might be on the buttes. The two troopers, meanwhile, lay down on the edge of the ridge to wait developments. As soon as they were out of sight of the buttes, the boys turned

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north and ran for some distance, then swinging east again regained the edge of the ridge opposite the open ground below. Here they could not be seen from any except the northernmost butte and, hastening down the slope, they ran across to the base of this butte and around to its farther side. Looking up, they saw two Indians lying behind the top of the next adjoining eminence, peeping over at the two soldiers across the valley. Simultaneously the three adventurers fired. The head of one of the warriors dropped between his outstretched arms and he lay still without a struggle. His companion sprang to his feet, cast one terrified glance at the unexpected assailants below him and leaped with a few long bounds down the steep slope into the ravine at its base and around the third butte, where he disappeared. Al and Wallace gave a shout, in which the Indian scout joined, and Al ran on in the direction taken by the warrior, followed by Wallace. But the scout hesitated.

"Maybe better go back now, eh?" he called.

"Oh, no; come on!" Al shouted back. "We can get out anywhere and we 've got him on the run."

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The scout said no more, but followed. They passed the ravine and the base of the next butte, and came to the gully between that and the fourth and last eminence to the south. From this eminence a little ridge ran eastward out across the open ground. As they came toward it an Indian rose half his height behind it, then, seeing them, dropped down again. Al ran to the left to get around behind him, and, as he did so, Wallace and the scout both saw another warrior, farther up on the fourth butte, stand erect and aim at him.

"Look out, Al!" shouted Wallace.

"Drop, Briscoe!" cried the guide at the same instant, and Al instinctively flung himself full length upon the ground just as the Indian fired. The bullet passed over him; but at this moment Wallace noticed still another hostile raise his head above the ridge and look eagerly toward Al. He had no time to interpret the glance, but the thought came to him that more Indians were showing themselves than he had expected, and he cried,

"Come on out, boys! They 're getting too thick."

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Followed by his companions, he sprang into the gully close at hand, expecting to see the valley beyond and the prairie ridge where the two Iowa soldiers were lying. But, instead, a few yards up the trench-like gulch he came to a sharp turn. As he rounded it, he caught a glimpse of several Indians crouching down a little farther on, their guns cocked and ready, and he dodged back again, almost colliding with Al and the scout, behind him.

"I guess we 're goners," he exclaimed, as he heard the swift patter of moccasined feet behind and on the edges of the gully above them. "Oh, what an idiot I was to get you fellows and myself into this. It 's my fault."

"No, it is n't, Wallace," declared Al. "It 's mine. If I 'd minded this scout, we 'd have gotten back all right."

But at this moment, which it seemed evident must be their last, they heard a deep, commanding voice speak a few rapid words in the Sioux tongue, and the sound of footsteps ceased.

"They 're going to rush us," whispered Al, his

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voice shaking but his eyes still courageous. "Let 's give them all the shots we can and then kill ourselves. Good-bye, Wallace, old man,— and good-bye, mother, and Annie, and Tommy," he added, to himself.

Thoroughly expecting death within a few seconds, he could hardly believe his ears when he heard the same deep, masterful voice which had halted their pursuers, say, loudly,

"Al Briscoe! Al Briscoe!"

Al, shaking and pale, looked at his companions, too amazed and bewildered even to hear the Sioux words, unintelligible to him, which followed his name. The mere utterance of the latter, in such a place and under such circumstances, was of itself ominous and terrifying enough to chill his blood, for it seemed to single him out from his companions for some special and horrible fate. But the Sioux scout looked at him solemnly.

"You understand?" he asked.

"No," answered Al, shuddering.

"He say, 'Al Briscoe, I, Te-o-kun-ko, want talk with you.'"

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"Te-o-kun-ko?" exclaimed Al, his strength coming back to him at that familiar name. "Indeed, yes. If he does kill me, I shall at least find out first."

He prepared to scramble up the side of the gully, but the scout restrained him.

"No go till he say he not kill," said he.

"Ask him," Al replied.

The scout called out the question in Sioux and Te-o-kun-ko answered, a note of surprise and satisfaction in his voice. The scout himself looked relieved.

"He say, 'you got interpreter. Good!'" he repeated. "He say, 'come up and bring him. We no kill.'"

There was nothing else to do, so the three scrambled to the top of the gully, Wallace bringing up the rear. When he had regained his feet, Al saw confronting him the superbly handsome figure of his brother's captor, the muscles of his arms, the curve of his deep chest, his proudly poised head, and eagle-like features, all mellowed and harmonized in the soft glow of early twilight, until he looked more like a bronze statue than a human being.

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The Indian was leaning on a long rifle and he wore a short tunic, buckskin leggings, and moccasins, all heavily embroidered with brilliant bead work, while a splendid war bonnet of brightly colored feathers hung from his head nearly to the ground. A handsome necklace of bears' claws, fastened around his neck and depending over his massive chest, completed a costume of savage magnificence strikingly becoming to this lord of the prairies. A few feet behind him stood a dozen or more warriors, their guns lying across their arms. They were as silent and motionless as Te-o-kun-ko, but the glances of sullen animosity which they flashed at Al and his companions showed clearly enough that it was only the strong hand of their leader which restrained them from instantly slaying the white boys and their Indian comrade.

Te-o-kun-ko did not move as his three involuntary guests came up before him but, leaning on his rifle, he regarded Al with a gaze so keen and steadfast that the latter's eyes wavered, and to break the silence he said,

"How."

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"How, Al Briscoe," replied the Indian, still without moving.

A rush of indignation suddenly swept over Al as he remembered who this man was.

"Ask him," said he, sharply, to the scout, "where my brother is."

He was determined to learn at least this much before anything could happen to prevent.

The question was repeated, but Te-o-kun-ko did not reply immediately. At length he said, through the interpreter,

"You are bold for a boy, Al Briscoe. Do you hold your life of no value that you demand your brother now, when you are in my power?"

"I hold his life of more value than my own, Te-o-kun-ko," replied Al, stoutly. "Would you not feel the same for your brother?"

The Indian flashed a look at him which seemed almost one of sympathy.

"Yes," said he, and paused. Presently he went on, "If you were not brave you would not be worthy of such a brother. But I knew that you were brave the day I took him from you beyond

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the Yellow Medicine, and I knew it better eleven suns ago when you came after me like a hungry wolf under the shadow of Tahkahokuty. So I will tell you."

He paused again, as if reflecting, then continued in the following words, uttering them deliberately, and they were interpreted, phrase after phrase, by the Sioux scout:

"Your brother was such a one as should have been an Indian, and so I thought to make him. He fears neither the darkness nor the flood nor the lightning, the buffalo stampede nor the rush and shouting of armed men. No lad of my tribe can shoot straighter than he and he rides a horse as the gray goose rides the north wind. He learned our speech more quickly than a Cheyenne, of our own race, could have learned it, and he came to love our life; I know, for he told me so, often. And he loved me, who sought to be as his father, and my squaw, Techon-su-mons-ka (The Sandbar), and his foster brothers and sisters, Mah-to-che-ga (The Little Bear), Ka-pes-ka-da (The Shell), and Mong-shong-sha (The Bending Willow). Your brother himself

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I called Pah-ta-ustah (Fire Eyes), and so the tribe will ever know him.

"But even after I came to be chief of my band, twelve moons ago, when the old chief was killed in battle with the Crows beyond the river where the elks drink (the Yellowstone), he would talk to me of his own people. He would talk of his father and mother and you, Al Briscoe, and of a girl papoose he called Annie, and of the place where he once lived, far in the South, where there is more forest than prairie, and where many trees bear upon their branches red and yellow fruit larger than the largest plums we know. Many and many a time I have talked with him of those things in the hours when the sun has gone to sleep and the tepee fires wink back at the stars. And since he grieved always for those who had been his family, and since I knew that I had been one to stand by while his father was killed (which was a bad deed and hurt my heart) it came to me at last that I must put him in the way to go back to his own people. It is true, too, that the life of the Indian is not now, and never will be any more, what it was in the past.

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Our days are numbered in the land of our fathers, and those who are young among us have little to look forward to."

Te-o-kun-ko spoke the last sentences sadly, looking far off into the yellow western sky as if he saw there visions of the last refuge of his race. Then he threw back his head and concluded, abruptly,

"So I took him southward and one moon ago I left him at the trading post above the mouth of the Wak-pah-shika (Bad River), which is called Fort La Framboise. Then I sped back to bear my part in the battle against your army."

"What?" exclaimed Al, in great excitement, stepping close to Te-o-kun-ko as the scout interpreted his last sentences, "You took him to Fort La Framboise? He is there now?"

The Indian inclined his head slowly.

"Yes," he replied, "if he has not already gone to the southward."

Al pressed his hand to his brow. His mind was in a whirl of bewilderment.

"Tommy at Fort La Framboise, and I here!" he exclaimed aloud, but speaking only to himself.

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"What shall I do now?" Then another idea occurred to him. "How do I know this is true?" he demanded, bold beyond discretion in his anxiety and satisfied, anyway, that he and his companions would be killed at the end of the interview. "Perhaps you still have him; perhaps he is dead."

But the Indian ignored the reflection upon his honesty.

"I tell you the truth, Al Briscoe," he asserted, solemnly.

He spoke Al's full name always, as if it were one word, as he doubtless thought it was. Then he lifted the necklace of bear's claws hanging around his neck and held it toward Al. At the bottom of it, between the two largest claws, was fastened a small ring of chased gold, its surface much worn, which Al instantly recognized as Tommy's.

"This he gave to me when I left him at Fort La Framboise," said he, "as a keepsake and a promise. And the promise was that he would come back some day, either to stay or to visit us, who are his Sioux kindred."

"So?" replied Al. He was beginning to realize

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dimly that Tommy must have had some very good reasons for his attachment to this magnificent warrior and his family, for he could hardly doubt longer the truth of what Te-o-kun-ko was telling him. The circumstances under which they were speaking together were not such as to tempt the Indian to deceit or apologies; for he was certainly master of the situation, and could either seize or kill Al and those with him whenever he wished. There was a moment's silence. Then Te-o-kun-ko stepped back and laid his rifle across his arm.

"You may go now, Al Briscoe," he said; "you and those with you."

"What?" cried Al, who had dared expect nothing but death. "You are going to spare our lives?"

"You may go in peace," responded the Sioux. "I do it for the sake of Pah-ta-ustah. Tell him so when you see him."

He stopped a moment, as if seeking words in which to express some oppressive thought. Then he went on,

"Your brother, Al Briscoe, knows not that his father is dead. I lacked ever the heart to tell him.

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But when you do so, tell him, likewise, that I, Te-o-kun-ko, have none of his blood on my hands. I fired no shot on that day at the place where you lived, though I did enough in all the time we were killing and burning along the Minnesota. My thoughts were on fire with the madness of slaughter, as were those of all who were there. Since then my mind has cleared and I know that the things which we did to the whites in Minnesota were bad; bad clear through. But we have been paying for them ever since; we are paying now, and is not the price even yet great enough? You have killed two, yes, four, of our men and women and children, for every one that we slew over there. You have burned our lodges and our robes and our winter meat; we shall starve and freeze in the time of snows which is soon to come. But it is the price, and we are paying."

A sudden impulse, mingled of admiration, gratitude and pity, seized Al toward this strange savage, so proud and yet so humble; so cold and yet so generous. He stepped forward and held out his hand.

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"Will you not come in with us, Te-o-kun-ko?" he asked, "and make your peace with the Great Father? Why fight any longer? Can you not see that it is hopeless; that the red men can never prevail against the power and the numbers of the whites?"

The chief ignored the friendly, outstretched hand, but he looked at Al frankly, even though defiantly. "No, Al Briscoe," he made answer, firmly. "You and I are enemies. And while my people have strength left to fight the white men, we will be enemies. I know that what you say is true, though many of my people will not yet believe it. The whites will conquer in the end and take from us the last of this, our great, free, beautiful land to which they have no right except the right of being strong enough. But at least the Indian can fight to the end and die as a warrior should, with his face toward his foes, while his soul goes up in the battle smoke to the Happy Hunting Grounds of Wakon Tonka (the Great Spirit). No, Al Briscoe, I have no friend among the white men save only Pah-ta-ustah, your brother. Go quickly, for when you are on the prairie once more, I shall hold back my braves

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no longer, and you will be killed if you delay or come back. Go!"

"Come on," said Al in a low tone to his companions. They turned and walked rapidly along the base of the butte toward the narrow valley west of it. As they passed its farther side, Al looked back. Te-o-kun-ko still stood as they had left him, a shadowy figure in the gathering dusk, regarding them with haughty attention, his rifle across his left arm. Only now his right hand was raised in a restraining gesture against his followers, who were crowding up behind him, cocking their guns and cursing in tones which grew rapidly louder and more threatening as they looked after their escaping victims.

Passing behind an angle of rock, Al exclaimed,

"Run! He can't hold them much longer!"

The three dashed across the narrow valley at top speed and almost as rapidly scrambled up the steep slope to the prairie, where they encountered the two cavalrymen, pale and excited.

"Good God, where have you been?" ejaculated one of the soldiers. "We thought you were killed

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or captured. There has n't been a shot for twenty minutes."

"No, but there will be in about twenty seconds," Al responded. "Come, come! Keep running."

Away they went toward the camp, hastened by a chorus of fierce war whoops from the valley and then by the patter of shots as a number of Te-o-kun-ko's warriors came over the edge of the prairie a hundred yards behind and raced after them. The bullets, however, sang harmlessly by and in a moment half a hundred of their own men, hearing the firing, came running to their rescue; whereupon the Sioux gave up the chase and fell back into the Bad Lands as night descended.

The three self-appointed raiders returned to camp, Wallace and the Indian scout with feelings of unmixed delight and thanksgiving over their escape, Al with several new problems to perplex him. He had been greatly relieved by Te-o-kun-ko's statements concerning Tommy's devotion to the memory of his family, which showed that the little boy's strength of affection had prevailed over what must have been a very great liking for the life of the In-

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dians. But, though the persistence of this affection on Tommy's part had finally induced his captor to give him his liberty, Al could by no means feel sure that such liberty might not be more dangerous for his brother than captivity had been. Had he been surrendered to the army, or at an army post, Al would have felt no anxiety, for he would have known that the boy would receive the best of care and be sent to his home safe and as promptly as possible. But what would such a mere child do among the hardened trappers and frontiersmen of Fort La Framboise, which Al knew was nothing more than a small trading-post of La Barge, Harkness and Company, fur traders of St. Louis? Tommy could have no idea of where his relatives were now and would be more likely to try to reach Minnesota than any other place. Moreover, if started off by the traders in that direction or even on a steamboat toward St. Louis, he knew nothing of travelling and might easily go astray or fall into dangerous company.

Al lay awake for a long time that night thinking over these problems and decided that next day he would talk them over with General Sully and ask his

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advice. But at daylight the movement of the army into column brought on an immediate renewal of the enemy's resistance; and for many hours, until the middle of the afternoon, the battle continued as hotly contested as on the previous day. Neither the General nor Al himself had a moment to think of anything except the gigantic task of repelling the Indian attacks.

Just before noon, Wallace was riding in from the left flank, where he had delivered a message to Major Brackett, when he was struck in the left arm, between shoulder and elbow, by a stray bullet. The wound soon became very painful and Wallace was obliged to dismount and go into an ambulance, where a surgeon extracted the bullet and made him as comfortable as possible. But Al, much as he was grieved over his friend's misfortune, could barely find time to spend a moment with him before hurrying back to his own pressing duties.

About mid-afternoon the country began to grow more level and the marching easier. The Indians, apparently discouraged, gradually ceased their attacks and at length the advance guard, mounting a

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rise from which a wide extent of country was visible in front, saw the last of the hostile army, several miles away to the southward, disappearing in a cloud of dust.

Hearty cheers arose from the whole army as the good news spread, for it was clear the final victory was won. A short halt was ordered and while it lasted the two bands with the Minnesota Brigade, one silver and the other brass, vied with each other in playing triumphant and patriotic airs, to the great delight of the men, who fully believed that the worst of their hardships were now over. But, unfortunately, experiences were yet in store for them not less distressing than those they had already passed through, though somewhat different in character.

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CHAPTER XV

IN THE WAKE OF THE GRASSHOPPERS

AFTER the halt, the march was resumed, as the General wished to push on to the Yellowstone as fast as possible and three or four hours of daylight could not be wasted lying in camp. The trains were now able to straighten out and move with less confusion and delay; and the troops, though still retaining their defensive formation, ready to repel any sudden attack, found it possible to draw in the flanks and advance more rapidly. Presently, as all the different elements of the army settled into a steady, methodical march, Al found a chance to speak to General Sully of the news he had heard of Tommy, so adventurously gained and so surprising in itself. The General listened with lively interest.

"Well," said he, when Al had concluded his account of his encounter with Te-o-kun-ko, "you

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certainly had a very unusual experience. This Te-o-kun-ko must be a remarkable Indian to have let you go, once he had you. Almost any Indian, particularly a Sioux, would have shot all of you at such a time, or else have tied you to stakes and tortured you. I wish he could be induced to come in. Such a man could be made very useful in bringing the rest of the nation to peace. As for your brother, assuming that this Indian has given you a straight story, it is hard to tell whether he may still be at Fort La Framboise or not. You know that trading post is only a short distance above Fort Sully and the traders may have taken him down and turned him over to Colonel Bartlett. Again, they may have placed him on some downward bound boat for St. Louis. But my guess would be that he is still at Fort La Framboise and that the traders are waiting for the return of my expedition so that the Minnesota troops can take him with them to Fort Ridgely."

"Then what do you think I had better do, General Sully?" inquired Al.

His commander meditated a moment. "Well,

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my boy," he began, "I am not anxious that you should leave me; I have enjoyed having you with us through this expedition, and I don't exaggerate when I say that you have made yourself as useful as any of my regular staff officers, and have been as courageous in conduct and as uncomplaining under hardships as any soldier could be,— probably more courageous than necessary, though that is never a condemnable fault. But my judgment is that, since you are in this country primarily to find your brother, your proper course will be to get to Fort La Framboise as soon as possible. When we reach the Yellowstone you will probably be able to go on ahead of the army to Fort Union, on the Missouri, where, no doubt, you can soon catch a boat downward bound from Fort Benton which will take you to Fort La Framboise in a few days."

Al was deeply gratified by his commander's words of praise, the more so since General Sully was not a man given to flattery nor to the bestowal of undue praise upon his subordinates. He very much disliked the idea of leaving the army and his many friends in it before the conclusion of the campaign,

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but he felt that the General was right. Indeed, it had been his opinion ever since his conversation with Te-o-kun-ko that he ought to get to Fort La Framboise as soon as he could, but he had also felt that he owed it to General Sully to await the latter's opinion and be governed by it, and he was glad to find that this opinion agreed with his own.

As the army advanced westward, the country became more sterile rather than less so. It was evident that there had been no rain in this region for a long time and whatever grass had ever grown there had, moreover, been eaten off right down to the roots by a plague of grasshoppers. These insects, moving across the country in vast multitudes, often caused widespread devastation all over the West in early days, and many a pioneer farmer saw his entire crop of corn, small grain, and vegetables utterly destroyed in a single day by the ravenous pests while he stood by, helpless to protect or save the fruits of his year of hard work. In the case of the Northwestern Indian Expedition, the visitation of the grasshoppers, together with lack of water, entailed untold suffering upon the thousands of ani-

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mals with the column. Hardly any corn or grain was left; and the poor beasts, enfeebled by their weeks of hard, hot marching, generally with insufficient food and water, were becoming mere skeletons, hardly able to keep moving.

The night of August 9, which had witnessed the end of the battle of the Little Missouri, as the fight in the Bad Lands came to be called, found the army camping beside the bed of a dry creek; and each man lay down to sleep after a supper consisting of one cracker and a bit of bacon, with nothing to drink, while the horses had neither food nor water. The two following days were more like nightmares than realities. Most of the mules and oxen of the two wagon trains contrived to stagger along somehow. But one by one the worn-out cavalry horses began to succumb. When they could keep up no longer, their riders would shoot them to end their sufferings; and all along the dreary miles of white, dusty alkali plains, sprinkled here and there with sparse growths of sage brush or cactus, the wake of the army was dotted with the bodies of scores of the poor, dumb victims of starvation and thirst.

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By this time nearly all the men were walking and leading their horses, in order to save the latter as much as possible. So passed the first heart-sickening day after the close of the Indian attacks; and as darkness fell at the end of a torturing march of thirty-two miles, the troops sunk down upon the brink of a lake of clear, sparkling water, so bitter with alkali that neither man nor beast could do more than taste it and then feast his aching eyes on its delusive, poisonous beauty. The victorious army, which had conquered all its human foes, seemed like to perish miserably under the rigors of inhospitable Nature.

Despite his own sufferings, Al had one satisfaction, which was that Cottontail kept up much better than most of the horses of the expedition. The fact that he was a tough, sturdy little animal by nature had something to do with his good condition; yet Al knew that the care he had given the horse throughout the campaign had been chiefly responsible for bringing him into the present crisis in a state to withstand its hardships; for he had never failed to supply Cottontail with water and

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grass whenever opportunity offered, even at the cost of his own rest or comfort. Yet even Cottontail had become so desperate with thirst by the second night of the desert march that he pawed and neighed and stamped the whole night through. As every other animal was doing the same thing, the camp was in an uproar of misery, and few of the men could sleep for sympathy with their suffering four-footed comrades.

Dawn came at last, after hours of darkness which seemed long as eternity, and the suffering caravan crept on. The guides had assured General Sully that he could reach the Yellowstone that day, and about four o'clock in the afternoon the advance guard suddenly broke into confusion, and those behind them saw the men toss their hats in the air, while the sound of cheers and carbine shots came back to their ears. The Yellowstone was in sight, though still several miles off, and across the wide, flat valley could be seen the groves of green cottonwoods along its banks with the strong, swift current of the river beyond, shining bright and beckoning in the sunlight. With an inrush of new vitality the

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whole column surged forward, and the drivers of the mule teams were hardly able to restrain the poor animals as they struggled to run forward into the stream. The General and his officers, declining, as they always did, to accept any advantage over the men afforded by their position, held back their own horses and allowed the trains and the troops to reach the river first. Al, mounting Cottontail for the first time in two days, rode back to the ambulance in which Wallace lay, and secured his canteen, as well as those of the driver and of two other wounded men who were riding with him. Hurrying, then, to the river he threw Cottontail's reins over his head and left him to drink, filled the canteens, and ran back to meet the ambulance. Then, after Wallace had drunk, he took from the latter's canteen his own first deep swallow of the cool, life-restoring water.

There was no more marching for that day. Men and animals had indulged too freely in the luxury of water to be fit for any more immediate exertion. The army went into camp and every one took a bath, for the first time in weeks, and washed out

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his clothing, soiled and stiffened with perspiration and dirt. But the arrival at the river had not relieved the situation with regard to forage, for the grasshoppers had cleaned off the grass right up to the banks of the Yellowstone. The soldiers, however, went in crowds into the cottonwood groves where they cut armfuls of branches and leaves and brought to their horses, who ate ravenously of these not unpalatable substitutes for grass. The expected steamboats were not in sight, but the cannon soon began to boom at intervals, signalling the army's arrival to the steamers, if the latter were anywhere near.

And then, just before sunset, a heavy column of smoke appeared, rising above the tree tops up river. It could come from nothing but steamboats.

"They evidently expected us to strike the river farther up," said General Sully, as he and a number of other officers assembled on the bank, anxiously watching the bend above for the first sight of the boats. "It 's fortunate they were within sound of the guns or I should have had to send scouts to look for them."

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In a few moments the bow of the first steamer emerged from behind the timber point, and then appeared her tall smoke stacks, with the little pilot-house between them, towering above the dazzling white woodwork of her cabins.

"The *Chippewa Falls!*" exclaimed every one in a breath, as she steamed majestically into full view.

Close behind her came the *Alone* and then the spectators watched the bend for the third steamer, the old *Island City,* so pleasantly remembered by the staff officers. But she did not appear; and shortly the *Chippewa Falls* glided up to the bank and a landing plank was thrown out. General Sully stepped aboard and heartily grasped the hand of Captain Hutchison, saying,

"I am delighted to see you, Captain. We are badly in need of you. How long have you been waiting for us?"

"Ten days," replied Captain Hutchison, broadly smiling his pleasure at seeing the army after his tedious days of expectation.

"So long? I congratulate you on your quick trip up this unknown river," said the General.

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"Rea, back here with the *Alone,* and I, have been the first to navigate it," replied the Captain, with a little pardonable pride.

"Rea and you?" exclaimed the General, anxiously. "Where is Lamont with the *Island City?*"

"I 'm sorry to tell you, General Sully," returned Captain Hutchison, "that the *Island City* struck a snag a couple of miles below the mouth of the Yellowstone on the evening we were entering. She sank very quickly and boat and cargo are a total loss, though Lamont is trying to get the engines out of her and hopes that one of the boats coming down from Fort Benton will take them on board and carry them to St. Louis for him."

General Sully and his officers stood aghast at this disastrous piece of news. Finally the Assistant Adjutant General, Captain Pell, spoke up.

"That puts us in fine shape," he lamented. "She had nearly all the corn, did n't she?"

"Fifty thousand pounds," replied General Sully, looking very much chagrined. "And most of the barrelled pork, and the building materials for the post on the Yellowstone. We shall have to give up

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building that this year. How much corn have you aboard, Captain?" he asked, addressing Captain Hutchison.

"Very little; three or four thousand pounds," the other replied. "The *Alone* has about the same."

"Enough for about one feed for all the stock in the command," said the General. "We shall have to pull out for Fort Union as quickly as possible."

"Yes, sir," Captain Hutchison interrupted; "and not only on account of your troops and animals, but on account of the boats. The river is falling very fast and I doubt if we can get over the shoals below here now without lightening the boats and double-tripping, or else using the army wagons to haul cargo around the shallow places."

"Well, we shall have to cross the river in the morning and march down at once," said the General, with a sigh as he thought of the plans he would have to forego on account of this unexpected misfortune. "Meanwhile my commissary and his assistant —" he indicated Lieutenant Bacon and Al,— "will issue rations to the troops for to-morrow's use from your boat."

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The General went ashore to greet Captain Rea, whose boat had now tied up to the bank, and the Lieutenant and Al went to work checking out provisions. It was Al's last experience as commissary's assistant, for when he returned to camp the General said to him:

"I think now will be your best opportunity for getting to Fort La Framboise promptly. You can go down with Captain Lamont if he takes a Fort Benton boat; and you had better start early in the morning so as not to miss him. The distance is about fifty miles and you can probably reach Fort Union to-morrow night. The fort is directly opposite the mouth of the Yellowstone, you know. I will give you a letter to the commanding officer advising him that the army will arrive there in the course of the next three or four days, and I will send an escort with you in case you should encounter Indians."

Al spent the evening in going about the camp and bidding good-bye to his many friends in the various commands, especially in the Dakota Cavalry, the Eighth Minnesota, and the Sixth Iowa. The Coyotes

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crowded around him as if he were one of their own number, and Captain Miner said to him,

"When you reach eighteen, come back to Dakota and enlist with us. I want such recruits as you."

And Corporal Wright added,

"Don't go after any more redskins the way you did at Tahkahokuty; for if the Coyotes aren't around, you 'll lose your hair."

"I 'll try to keep it on, Charlie," replied Al, laughing. "And, meantime, you fellows want to remember when you go into action that you 're not the whole line of battle, or some of you may suddenly get bald, too."

His last visit was to Wallace Smith and it had a result both surprising and pleasant.

"I wish I could go with you, Al," said Wallace, feeling of his stiff, bandaged arm disgustedly. "It 's awfully tiresome dragging around in an ambulance, away from the boys and not able to do anything. And Doctor Freeman tells me I shall not be fit for duty for at least three months; so, though I can use my right arm perfectly and feel as well as I ever did in my life, I suppose I 'll have to be on

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the sick list all the time until the Second Brigade gets back to Minnesota."

Al looked at his friend steadily for a moment while an idea rapidly evolved itself in his mind.

"Well, why not go with me?" he asked at length. "If you 're to be laid up for three months, anyway, you 're entitled to sick furlough for that long. Yet you can ride, and shoot a revolver, and get around all right, and you can reach Minnesota in ninety days more comfortably for yourself and with less trouble to the army and the hospital corps by going on a boat to St. Louis and then up the Mississippi to St. Paul, than you can by marching overland with the column."

Wallace's eyes and mouth opened wide with sheer astonishment at the brilliance of this plan.

"You 're a genius, Al," he exclaimed. "I believe it can be done, too. It 's against my principles to play off and I would n't think of trying to get away if it was n't plain that I 'm perfectly useless here for the rest of the season. But it will be bully if I can go down with you. Let 's hunt up Doctor Freeman."

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They found the Doctor, who was Medical Director of the army, at headquarters. He at once gave his approval to the plan and wrote a recommendation to Colonel Thomas that Private Wallace Smith, of the Eighth Minnesota Volunteer Infantry, be given a ninety-day furlough. Colonel Thomas was quickly found, and in five minutes the furlough was issued, authorizing Wallace to be absent from his regiment until November 12, and to report for duty on or before that date at Fort Ridgely, Minnesota.

Next morning just after daybreak Al and Wallace, accompanied by twelve cavalrymen under a sergeant, boarded one of the steamers, which were already busy ferrying troops and wagons across the river. Here Al bade farewell to Lieutenant Dale and the other staff officers who had been his closest companions for so long. General Sully, as always devoting his personal attention to the care of his troops, was on the bank, directing the passage of the river. He handed Al the letter to the Captain of Company I, Thirtieth Wisconsin Infantry, commanding at Fort Union, and shook hands with him heartily.

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"I am sorry to be leaving the expedition so abruptly, General," said Al. "I wish I could stay with you until the campaign is finished."

"You won't miss much," returned the General. "The campaign is virtually over now and we shall be getting down to Fort Rice as rapidly as possible. We will march for Fort Union from here as soon as we are rid of these emigrants, who will go on alone to the gold fields after we have taken them across the river on the boats." Then he continued, kindly, "I wish you the best of success in finding your brother, my boy. I hope we shall meet again, and if you decide to try for West Point and I can help you in any way, let me know. Take care of yourself, now, and don't indulge too much in your weakness for getting into ticklish places. Good-bye!"

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CHAPTER XVI

ADRIFT IN A BARGE

ONCE across the Yellowstone, the little party set out at a good pace, for they had a long, hard day's journey before them. They found the country as destitute of grass as it had been west of the Little Missouri, and the ground seemed to have been fairly burned to powdery dust by the sun. As they travelled over the desolate country, they often thought pityingly of the troops behind them, who would have to traverse it much more slowly than they were doing and would, therefore, feel its discomforts more keenly. But, at least, the army would be near the river, so there would be no more such suffering from thirst as had been experienced in the terrible march out of the Bad Lands. Not an Indian was seen during the day; and the party, dusty and weary, rode up to the bank of the Missouri after nightfall. It was too wide and dangerous a

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stream to cross in the darkness; so bivouac was made until morning, and then, in response to signals, several skiffs put off from Fort Union and came over. Some of the soldiers stripped and, puting their clothing and equipments in the boats, swam across the river on their horses, but Al and Wallace, as well as most of the men, rode over in the boats, holding the bridles of their horses and letting them swim behind.

On entering Fort Union, Al delivered his letter and then inquired for Captain Lamont.

"He is still down at the wreck of his steamer, about two miles below here," the commanding officer informed him. "But if you are going down with him, you have arrived just in the nick of time. The steamer *Belle Peoria* came down yesterday from Benton, and she is taking on the engines of the *Island City* now. You had better get right down there or they may leave without you."

Al and Wallace galloped off down river at once, accompanied by two cavalrymen of their late escort to bring back their horses. Leaving so hastily gave them time for only a glance at Fort Union,

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though they sincerely wished for an opportunity to examine it more closely, for it was an interesting, and in that wilderness land, even an imposing structure. Built in 1829 as the then most advanced trading post of the American Fur Company, it had become in later years the centre of the fur trade of a vast territory, extending from the Rocky Mountains to the British line. It was larger and more substantially built than any other trading fort in the American West, and those who had seen them declared that no post of the Hudson's Bay Company in the British Possessions compared with it. Its stockade was two hundred and forty by two hundred and twenty feet in size, built of massive timbers and flanked by two large stone bastions, well armed with cannon, while several of its numerous interior buildings were also of stone. George Catlin, the distinguished artist who travelled all over the New World in making up his great collection of paintings of the American Indians, had visited the fort in 1832; Maximilian, Prince of Neuwied, the distinguished Austrian naturalist, had been there in 1833; and in 1843 the equally

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famous American naturalist, John James Audubon, had made the post his headquarters for some time. But when Al and Wallace passed through it, the days of the old establishment were numbered; two years later it was to be dismantled, the new army post of Fort Buford, two miles below and nearly opposite the spot where the *Island City* had sunk, taking its place as a military establishment.

The boys had not ridden far across the bottom, which was partly timbered and partly open grass land, when they saw the wreck of the steamer, lying out beyond a shore bar, her smoke stacks and upper works protruding above the water. The *Belle Peoria* was moored beside her and men could be seen working on both vessels. Al breathed a sigh of relief when he saw that they were not too late. Riding on across the bar, the boys were soon at the water's edge and about one hundred feet from the steamers. In answer to their shouts a small boat immediately put off from the *Belle Peoria* and came over for them. It was with the regret of parting from an old friend that Al for the last time caressed the rough neck and soft nose of Cotton-

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tail, who had borne him so faithfully through many perils and privations. The little horse nuzzled Al's cheek affectionately, as if he realized that they were bidding each other good-bye; then, with a strong hand-clasp from each of the soldiers, the boys stepped into the yawl and were rowed to the *Belle Peoria.*

It did not take long to explain to Captain Lamont their object in coming, and he seemed heartily glad of their company.

"You didn't get here any too soon," said he. "We shall be off in an hour. When we get to Fort La Framboise I have no doubt the captain of the *Belle* will stop long enough for you to find out if your brother is there, Al, and if he is, we can all go on together to St. Louis."

The *Belle Peoria* was under way at the expected time. Though the water was quite low, her pilots were skilful and knew the river so thoroughly that for some time she met with no unusual delays. After their months of strenuous campaigning it was pleasant for the boys to lounge about on the steamer's decks with nothing to do except watch

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the interweaving ripples of the river's surface, the occasional bitterns and cranes which flopped up from the lonely sandbars and sailed slowly away as the boat approached, and the rise and fall of the endless succession of bluffs along the shores. In a few weeks the Northwestern Indian Expedition would be following the crests of the northward bluffs on its way to Fort Rice, where it would break up; the Second Brigade, with the exceptions of garrisons left at Fort Rice and Fort Berthold, returning to Minnesota; while the First Brigade would go on down to Fort Sully, Fort Randall, and Sioux City.

After the crushing defeats which had been administered to the Indians at Tahkahokuty and the Little Missouri, it did not seem that steamboats on the Missouri ought to be in much danger from them; but the people on the *Belle Peoria* — both the members of her own crew and those of the *Island City* — knew that undoubtedly many hostiles had scattered from the broken Sioux camps who might be encountered anywhere along the river, eager for a chance to waylay a steamboat and slaughter a few of her

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crew in revenge for their own recent losses in battle. So, in laying the steamer up for the night, the men always "sparred her off" from the bank by setting long poles between the gunwale and the shore, so that she could not be boarded; or, if a mid-channel sandbar was convenient, with water on both sides of it, she would be moored there. Such precautions served well enough for night, but in the daytime the boat had to take her chances in following the channel close in against one shore or the other.

On the third day out from the Yellowstone the boat passed Fort Berthold, a fur trading post and the agency of the Arickaree and Mandan Indians, about midway between Fort Union and Fort Rice. For some hours afterward she continued running at a good speed, and at length passed a little below a beautiful forest on the left shore, called the Painted Woods. At this point there was a large sandbar in the middle of the river, while on the bank opposite to the woods the bluffs came sheer up to the river, and the pilot naturally chose the branch of the stream along their base, as the main channel

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will usually follow along a bluff bank. But in this case he soon found he had made a mistake, for he ran the boat into a pocket and could go no farther. There remained nothing to do but send out the yawl to sound through the other branch and find out if there was enough water there to carry the boat.

It occurred to Al that it would be a pleasant diversion to accompany the yawl, so he volunteered to pull one of the oars, and was accepted. The mate of the *Belle Peoria,* who was in charge of the yawl, ran into the other chute and soon found the channel; whereupon he signalled across the bar to the steamer, and while she was backing out and coming around, the crew of the yawl rowed over to the lower end of the Painted Woods and landed. The men pulled the boat's bow a little way out on the bank and then strolled away a few yards into the woods, where it was cool and shady. One man only remained in the yawl, and he, like Al, was a volunteer. He was Jim, the *Island City's* deck hand who had quarrelled with Al on the up trip. In spite of several attempts to escape while near Fort Union,

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Jim had been unable to jump his round-trip contract with Captain Lamont, and was now reluctantly returning toward St. Louis and that Southern Confederacy which he supported so loudly in words and so feebly in deeds.

The men who had landed, namely, the mate and Al, four other oarsmen and the leadsman, had been in the woods but a minute or two when, without the least warning, a dozen musket shots rang out from the bushes around them, instantly followed by a chorus of terrifying Indian war whoops. Two of the oarsman fell dead at the first fire; the rest of the party turned and dashed for the boat. But several Indians had crept between them and the landing and a moment elapsed before the mate and Al, who had their revolvers, could drive them back far enough to reach the shore. When they did so, to their horror they discovered the yawl out in mid-stream and some little distance down, rapidly drifting toward the bar. Jim was not to be seen, for he was lying flat in the bottom of the boat to escape the Indian bullets, but he was evidently pulling the rudder ropes to guide the yawl as nearly

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as possible to the bar. The *Belle Peoria* had caught the alarm, and her decks were swarming with armed men; but she was just rounding the head of the bar and was still farther away than the yawl, so that her people dared not fire on the Indians for fear of hitting their own men on the bank.

"We 'll have to swim for it, boys!" shouted the mate, and flinging off his coat he dived into the river like a duck and struck out for the bar, keeping beneath the surface except when he had to come up for a second to breathe.

Al and the other men followed his example. It was not more than fifty yards to the bar but every inch of the way was fraught with deadly peril. Whenever he came to the surface to breathe, as he had to several times, Al heard the bullets whistling about his head. Once he heard another oarsman, a few feet from him, give a gurgling cry and saw his hands thrust up and clutch the air as he sank, struck by one of the merciless bullets. Before the survivors reached the bar, the fire of those on the steamer had driven the Indians back into the

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Painted Woods, with probably a greater loss than they had inflicted upon the crew of the yawl, though of the latter, one had drowned and one been shot in the water, besides the two killed on shore at the first fire.

When the survivors were safely back on the *Belle Peoria,* the mate stepped up to Jim, who had landed in the yawl at the lower end of the bar, and shouted,

"You scoundrel, you ran away and left us to shift for ourselves, did n't you? I 've a mind to throw you overboard."

"I did n't run away," snarled Jim. "The yawl slipped off the bank and I could n't get it back."

Backing up against a stanchion he faced the angry mate and the crowd behind him like a desperate animal at bay and cast one swift, venomous glance at Al which caused the latter to feel a sudden suspicion.

"Did you think you 'd get rid of me that way?" he demanded, confronting the deck hand. "Were you willing to see six other men murdered just to get even with me?"

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Jim dared not look at him again.

"I didn't think anything," he muttered. "I tell you, the boat slipped off."

"It slipped off infernally quick after we landed, then," cut in the mate. "You were a quarter of a mile down river when we reached the bank."

"I couldn't help it; it slipped," Jim reiterated, as if he could think of no other defence.

"Well, I think you 're a liar," bluntly stated the mate, "but I can't prove it, so you 'll save your skin this time. But if I ever catch you at any more of your scaly, rattlesnake tricks, you 'll go to kingdom come mighty quick, and I 'll be the man that 'll send you there."

He turned on his heel and walked away, leaving Jim to settle as best he could with the other deck hands, all of whom were now feeling very bitter toward him. A strong party went ashore and found and buried the bodies of the unfortunate men who had been killed there, victims of an attack such as brought death to scores of gallant steamboat men during the years of the Sioux wars.

The following day the *Belle Peoria* reached Fort

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Rice, where Colonel Dill and his command were very glad to see them and to hear the first news of General Sully's expedition which they had received in several weeks. The garrison was in good health and spirits; but they had been several times attacked by Indians, and were now much concerned for the safety of a large emigrant train from Minnesota, under Captain James Fisk, which had arrived at the fort in July and moved West over Sully's trail, in spite of warnings, determined to reach the gold mines. This party a little later came very near being annihilated by the Indians on the edge of the Bad Lands; but a strong relief column sent out by General Sully after his return to Fort Rice finally rescued them and brought them back safe.

After leaving Colonel Dill's hospitable command the journey of the steamboat was uneventful for several days, until one morning she came to the bank at Fort La Framboise. She was stopping wholly on Al's account and with beating heart he went ashore, accompanied by Wallace and Captain Lamont. They ascended a gently sloping hill to the

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small and rather dilapidated trading post, which stood on its summit. Here they found that the factor, a Frenchman, was not yet up, but they soon got him out.

"Un white boy by ze name Tomas Breescoe?" said the factor, when Al had explained their errand. "Oui, je savvy heem. Il est un reg'lair leetle Injin. Py gar, he ride like ze centaur!" His eyes narrowed shrewdly. "Un Yanktonais bring heem here, seex, saven week ago. Sacre! How mooch I pay pour ze pauvre boy release! You pay me back, oui?"

"Certainly," replied Al, yet with many misgivings, for he had no idea what the Frenchman might ask. "You shall be repaid for any expense you may have been put to."

Captain Lamont nudged him. "He 's going to gouge you," he whispered. "Don't be too eager. Find out where Tommy is."

"I have n't much money," continued Al, speaking the sober truth. "Is my brother here now?"

"Eet ees not so ver' mooch," proceeded the factor, ignoring Al's question and quickly chang-

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ing his tack regarding the ransom. "T'ree horse, feefty pound flouair, ten pound shot et ten pound powdair."

Al was aghast, for he understood that these items would cost far more than he had money to pay for. But here Captain Lamont broke into the conversation.

"That 's more than Mr. Briscoe or I can pay you for just now," said he, blandly. "However, we can give you a note and pay the amount over to Mr. Charles P. Chouteau for you when we reach St. Louis."

Mr. Chouteau was the manager of the American Fur Company and the factor knew as well as did Captain Lamont that he would not allow one of his employees to practise such extortion upon the relatives or friends of an unfortunate prisoner rescued from the savages. The Frenchman shifted his feet uneasily.

"Has m 'sieu feefty dollair, cash?" he asked.

"Fifty dollars?"

"Oui, m 'sieu. Pour zat ve call ze mattair — how you say? — sqvare."

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The Captain looked at Al and nodded, for the amount was about one-third of what the man's first demand would have made it.

"But I have n't even that much, Captain," said Al, despairingly.

"I have forty dollars, Al," said Wallace. "Take that." He thrust his hand into his pocket.

"Pshaw, that 's all right," broke in the Captain, stopping him. "I have plenty, but we don't want to be bled, that 's all." He turned to the factor. "Very well," he remarked. "We 'll pay you fifty dollars, cash. Now where 's the boy?"

"M 'sieu has ze cash money here, dans sa poche, for geeve me now?" the factor persisted, anxiously.

"Yes, yes," replied Captain Lamont, impatiently. "But before I give it to you, you must first show us the boy."

The Frenchman waved his hands pathetically.

"Oui, mais je ne peut pas show ze pauvre boy. Il est depart down ze rivair pour la S'in' Louis pour — two veek."

"You say you can't show him?" exclaimed the

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Captain. "He started for St. Louis two weeks ago?"

"Oui, m 'sieu, oui. Sur le steamair *North Vind.* Je poot heem ver' comfor'ble sur le steamair. He shall reach S'in' Louis safe."

"Huh! That remains to be seen!" grunted the Captain. Then he looked sympathetically into Al's disappointed face. "Well, my boy," said he, "that seems to be all there is to it. Your brother has gone down and you can do nothing but follow. Here is your money, factor. We thank you for your trouble." He handed the Frenchman fifty dollars in greenbacks from an amply filled wallet, for the steamboat officers of those days earned handsome salaries and were seldom without plenty of money.

Then the Captain and his two young companions retraced their steps to the steamboat landing and the *Belle Peoria* resumed her journey. Al was perfectly certain that the Frenchman had simply robbed them of fifty dollars, for he did not believe that Te-o-kun-ko had either asked or received one cent

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of ransom for Tommy's delivery. He was, moreover, far from satisfied concerning his young brother's present safety, but he was helpless in the circumstances, and could only hope that Tommy would reach St. Louis all right and would there seek his uncle, Mr. Colton.

Ten days sufficed to bring the *Belle Peoria* to Omaha, and here her captain received so tempting an offer to carry a cargo back to a point up-river that he determined to accept it. His decision was an unexpected misfortune to Captain Lamont, but the latter was not a man to be discouraged by such untoward events. It will be remembered that on her way up-river, the *Island City* left a large barge at Omaha which had so impeded her progress that she could not tow it further. This barge was still lying moored to the bank where it had been left, and into it Captain Lamont loaded his engines and other machinery from the *Belle Peoria,* determined to complete his journey to St. Louis by drifting down-river with the current.

The size of the barge was such that it could easily accommodate the cargo of machinery and

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still leave ample living room for the entire crew of the shipwrecked *Island City*. Many men were necessary to handle the unwieldy craft with oars, sweeps, and rudders in facing hard winds, in sparring off from bars or snags, and in encountering the many other perils and embarrassments incident to such navigation. Tarpaulins were spread over the boat, protecting both the machinery and the crew; a galley was arranged and a cook stove set up; a sufficient supply of provisions was laid in for the first few days of the journey; and, thus equipped, the strange craft set out on her southward voyage.

It was a slow journey, but no one could have called it monotonous, for a score of times every day all hands were called out to hard work of one sort or another. Now it was to pole the barge off a shoal place on which she had drifted, or again, to row her down the length of some bend against a flat head wind which was beating her back up the river faster than the current bore her the other way. Occasionally the men had to land and, taking hold of a long "cordelle rope" attached to the barge's stern, walk up the bank in a long, straining line and pull

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her back into the channel from some "blind chute" into which she had blundered, dragging her along as in the early days of the fur trade the crews of the keel boats were obliged to drag their vessels clear from St. Louis to Fort Union, except when rare favoring winds allowed the use of a sail. More than once during the long days between Omaha and Kansas City, Al and his companions worked for hours up to their waists and shoulders in the water alongside the barge, freeing her from some obstruction or a lodgement against the bank.

But all labors have an end, and at length the great bend at Kansas City came in sight, with the little town straggling along the river and the rugged, precipitous hills rising behind it, which in a few decades were destined to be covered with the crowded dwellings and the towering business structures of a great metropolis. The barge was moored for the night, and most of her crew, including Al and Wallace, seized the opportunity to get a glimpse of civilization once more and to hear the news of the day by strolling up-town in the evening.

"I 'll tell you what I want," said Wallace, as

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they walked along Broadway, looking into the brightly lighted shop windows and enjoying the novel sensation of being on a busy street with crowds of people about them. "I want a great, big, tall, fat glass of lemonade, with ice in it. I haven't had one since I was in St. Paul last."

"Nor I since I left St. Louis," rejoined Al. "That for me, too."

They soon came to an ice-cream and confectionery store where a number of people were sitting about at small tables, eating, drinking, and talking, quite after the manner of dwellers in a real city. The boys took their places in two vacant chairs at a table where two men were seated, one a soldier and the other a civilian. After giving their orders to the waiter, the boys sat silent for a moment, feeling an embarrassing consciousness of their decidedly soiled and unkempt appearance in the comparatively well dressed crowd, which included a number of ladies. Presently the soldier at their table said to his companion, after a silence induced by the intrusion of the boys upon their privacy,

"Well, anyhow, I 'll tell you if old Pap Price

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ever gets as far as the Kansas line with his ragamuffin army, we 'll give him a reception that he won't forget soon."

Al and Wallace began to listen, for this sounded interesting.

"You Kansas Militia fellows are too much scattered," returned the civilian. "Why does n't General Curtis get you concentrated down here by the border somewhere? I tell you, old Pap will be here before you know it. Why, he 's already to Jefferson City, according to the latest despatches, cleaning up everything before him and coming this way like a jack rabbit. What is there between here and his front to stop his twenty-five or thirty thousand men? Nothing! Nothing to make him even hesitate."

"There will be something to make him hesitate, though," insisted the Kansas militiaman, stoutly. "Curtis *is* concentrating, and we 'll be sent across the State line to meet and stop Price somewhere around Lexington. You watch!"

"Would you go across the line?" queried the other.

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"Certainly I would."

"Well, then, you 're an exception," returned the civilian. "I 'll bet you two bits that if the Kansas militia is ordered across the State line, nine-tenths of them will refuse to go. They 're too afraid they 'll be kept away over election and too afraid they 'll have to give up a little shred of their sacred 'State Rights' to the National Government."

"Oh, well, some of the boys feel that way, of course," replied the militiaman, defensively, "but not all, by any means,"

Al's curiosity had reached the breaking-point.

"I beg your pardon," he interrupted, leaning across the table, "but will you kindly tell me if General Sterling Price's army is invading Missouri?"

The two men looked at Al and Wallace in amazement.

"Why, yes, I should say it is," answered the militiaman. "Where have you come from that you didn't know that?"

"We have just come down the Missouri in a barge," Al answered, "and we haven't heard any late news; nothing since we left Omaha. We have

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been up in Dakota all Summer with General Sully, fighting the Sioux Indians."

"Oh, is that so?" asked the other. "We have n't heard much from that campaign, either. Did you whip the Indians?"

"Yes, we defeated and scattered them in two pretty big battles. But what about General Price?"

"Why, he entered southeast Missouri from Arkansas about the middle of September with an army of anywhere from fifteen to thirty thousand men. He tried to take Pilot Knob, but General Ewing, who used to be here at Kansas City, you know, was there with a small force and repulsed him badly; knocked the tar clean out of him, in fact. Then he started for St. Louis but there were so many troops there that he seems to have given it up; at least, he is moving west along the Missouri and I guess he 's somewhere around Jeff City now. I don't know whether he can take it or not; according to the latest despatches Rosecrans is going to try to hold the city. But we 're looking for Price to come on out here and try to invade Kansas, anyhow."

"You say he 's coming up the Missouri?" asked

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Al. "We 've got to keep on down the river to St. Louis with our barge."

"Well, you 'd better look out for old Pap, then," rejoined the other. "He 'll catch you, sure, and likely burn your boat; and if he don't the guerillas will. They 're awful bad now, and there is n't a steamboat ever gets through without being attacked, and often they 're destroyed."

Al felt a sudden chill of apprehension.

"Do you know whether they attacked the steamer *North Wind* on her way down?" he asked, anxiously.

"No, I don't remember it," the militiaman returned.

"Why, yes, you do," broke in his companion. "Don't you know, two or three weeks ago a band of guerillas got the *North Wind* somewhere between Lexington and Miami? They crossed the river on her and then burnt her up. It was reported several of her people were killed in the mix-up."

"Oh, that 's right; I had forgotten," returned the soldier. Then to Al he said, curiously, "Why do you ask?"

"Nothing," answered Al, in a dull voice. "Only

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I had a young brother on her who had been a prisoner among the Indians. He was going home to his mother in St. Louis."

"Pshaw, that 's too bad!" exclaimed the militiaman, sympathetically. "But he 's probably gotten through all right."

"Maybe he has and maybe not," said Al. "It 's hard to tell in such times. Come on, Wallace," he added. "Let 's go back to the boat."

They rose abruptly and left the store. Al slept very little that night, and when he did his rest was broken by troubled dreams of Tommy; he imagined his brother in all sorts of desperate situations and losing his life in a variety of horrible ways. Even when awake and thinking rationally, he realized that almost any of the fancies of his nightmare might easily be realities, for the guerilla warfare in Missouri at this time had degenerated into a carnival of barbarous brutality hardly exceeded in the history of any country, and the mercy or cruelty dealt out to a prisoner by one of these bands of lawless marauders depended almost wholly upon the humor of the guerilla chief.

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CHAPTER XVII

CAPTURED BY GUERILLAS

CAPTAIN LAMONT was disturbed by the rumors he heard at Kansas City of the dangerous condition of navigation below that point; but he was a brave and determined man, and would not be swerved from his purpose of reaching St. Louis, now that he had gotten so far on the way and overcome so many difficulties. The next morning the barge started out as usual, and as there was deeper water the farther down river she went, her progress became more rapid. Four days after leaving Kansas City she tied up for the night opposite Brunswick, Missouri, a town about twenty-five miles, by the channel, above Glasgow. Though it was said guerillas had been in Brunswick the day before, none had yet interrupted the journey of the barge, nor had any even been seen; and Captain Lamont and his men had begun to think that the alarming rumors

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circulating through the country were largely without foundation.

The following morning, a short time after the boat got under way, Captain Lamont found that the deck hand, Jim, was missing, and then he made the additional discovery that his own wallet was also gone. Though a guard had been maintained on the boat all night, as usual, Jim had contrived in some way to slip ashore and escape with the money. The circumstances made Captain Lamont somewhat uneasy.

"I don't care about the money," said he. "There were only a few hundred dollars in the pocket-book. But I should like to know what that fellow wanted to get away for when we are so near St. Louis. He could have robbed me just as easily there, and then he would have been in a country where he could get a job when the money was spent. But he certainly can't expect to get one around here."

"I 'll tell you, Captain," said Al, "I believe he 's gone to try and find some rebs or guerillas to make an attack on our boat. You know he 's a rebel at heart. He probably figures he can get me into

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trouble that way, and you, too; for he does n't like you any too well."

"That 's a long guess," replied the Captain, after studying Al's theory for a moment, "but it may be correct. Anyway, I wish I knew what he 's up to."

The boat drifted lazily on for a couple of hours and at length came into the head of a long, gradual bend having, on its north side, a low, open shore of sandbars, with meadows and farm lands farther back, and on the south an extensive belt of timber growing between the water's edge and the bluffs. The channel ran close in along the timbered shore, and the place was such a favorable one for an armed party to attack passing river craft, and had so often been utilized for that purpose during the war, that it had come to be known as Bushwhacker Bend,—"bushwhacker" and "guerilla" being terms used interchangeably for describing the irregular partisans along the border.

As the boat came to the head of the timber, the pilot crowded her over as far as possible toward the north bank. But she had gone only a short distance when a crowd of apparently about fifty men,

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wearing all manner of ragged and dirty garments, suddenly arose among the trees and fired a rattling volley of musketry point-blank at the barge. The bullets plunged into her wooden sides and tore through her tarpaulin covers, though, almost miraculously, no one was hit. Then a man wearing a sabre and dressed in gray clothes somewhat resembling a Confederate uniform, stepped forward and, waving his sabre toward the boat, shouted, with an oath,

"Bring that boat in here or I 'll kill every man on board!"

Seeing nothing but guns pointing toward him and knowing well that the guerilla chief could make good his threat, Captain Lamont shouted back,

"All right. We 'll come over. Don't fire again."

The pilot swung the barge over toward the south shore, the bushwhackers following her down the bank until she touched the land. Then the chief, accompanied by about half of his villainous-looking followers, sprang aboard.

"I 'm Captain John C. Calhoun Yeager, u' the

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Confederate States army," said he, pompously, throwing out his chest as he confronted Captain Lamont.

"Heaven pity the Confederate States army, then!" muttered the mate, who was standing behind him.

"What 's that?" demanded Yeager, turning sharply.

"I said, sir, that the Confederate States Army is honored," replied the mate, meekly.

"Oh!" said the guerilla chief, mollified. "You bet."

He smoothed down his coat with a satisfied air, then resumed to Captain Lamont,

"I 'm gonta search this yere boat fer Yankee soldiers, an' if anybody peeps he 'll git plugged full o' holes."

Wallace, who was standing beside Al, turned pale, for he knew not what this might mean for him. He was in uniform and there was no escape, as Yeager immediately pointed to him and continued,

"There 's one of 'em. Jerk him up, boys."

Half a dozen of his men sprang upon Wallace like

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cats upon a mouse, pulling his arms roughly behind him. Wallace uttered a cry of pain as his wounded arm was twisted.

"Oh, please don't!" he begged. "My left arm is wounded."

"The devil it is!" sneered one of the guerillas, giving it an extra twist as he jerked a piece of cord around Wallace's wrists. "Then it needs exercise to limber it up."

Al's face turned pale with cold fury. He stepped forward and, before any one could think what he intended doing, his fist shot out into the guerilla's right eye with terrific force, sending him to the deck like a stone.

"You dirty cur!" he growled. "I 'll give you some exercise, too."

"Don't, Al, don't!" pleaded Wallace, now more frightened for his friend's safety than for his own.

Yeager, paying no attention whatever to the fall of his retainer, fixed his cold eyes on Al as he heard Wallace call him by name.

"I 've got it straight," said he, "that there 's another blue belly on here, not in soldier clothes. His

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name 's Al Briscoe an' he 's a friend o' this yere kid,"—indicating Wallace. "I reckon you 're the ticket," he went on, addressing Al. "Take him in tow, boys."

"He 's not a soldier," exclaimed Wallace. "He 's never enlisted."

"This is Jim's work," whispered the mate to Captain Lamont. "Nobody else would know about Al."

Captain Lamont repeated Wallace's remonstrance.

"This boy is not a soldier, Captain Yeager," he declared. "I know that to be a fact."

"Well, I got it straight that he is," persisted Yeager, insolently, "so you may as well shut up. Take 'em ashore," he went on, to the men who held Al and Wallace by the arms. Then he added, to the others, "Search the boat."

"Oh, I 'm dreadfully sorry, Al," moaned Wallace, as they were pushed and kicked out on the bank. "It 's my fault you were taken."

"No, they 'd have found me out, anyway," Al answered, smiling bravely at his friend. "I 'd a

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good deal rather stay with you, old man, than to have you face this alone."

The boys were held on the bank while the guerillas went through the barge, taking what they pleased in the way of food and the clothing of the men. They seized no more prisoners and finally came ashore, when Yeager, brandishing a pistol, shouted to Captain Lamont,

"Now, then, cast off an' git out an' don't stop ner monkey around fer two hours, anyhow, er I 'll sink yer rotten old tub an' you with it!"

There was nothing to do but obey, and with many glances of profound regret and apprehension at Al and Wallace, standing guarded by a dozen brawny ruffians on the bank, Captain Lamont and his men shoved the barge off and drifted on down the river. As the boys watched the boat recede in the distance, it seemed to them that they had looked their last upon friendly faces, and that the portals of death were closing upon them as the barge finally disappeared.

When the boat was gone, Yeager turned his

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attention to his prisoners. Seating himself under a tree, he regarded them genially and remarked,

"P'utty sporty clothes you got on. I reckon some o' my boys needs them worse 'n you do."

"Yes, I reckon," said one of the guerillas, slouching up and leering into Al's face. It was the fellow whom Al had knocked down and he could leer with only one eye for the other was closed and the flesh around it had already turned blue-black in color. He glanced down at Al's shoes, which had been purchased in Kansas City.

"Those look about my size," said he, comparing them with his own broken-down cowhide boots. "I 'll take them before I shoot you."

He knelt down and began to unlace one of the shoes. Al's anger and contempt were so great that he had lost all sense of discretion. But he showed his feelings in unusual ways.

"Certainly; help yourself," said he, in a smooth tone of mocking politeness, thrusting his foot a little way forward. "I always like to have a nigger take care of my shoes for me."

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The crowd laughed uproariously and the ruffian sprang to his feet and slapped Al across the mouth.

"Take 'em off yerself an' hand 'em to me!" he shouted.

Al looked around at the other men.

"If you will untie my hands and leave me free to use them," said he, "I will hand you my shoes,—and something more." He glanced significantly at the guerilla's still uninjured eye.

Again the crowd laughed, and approvingly. It was evident that Al's fearless behaviour pleased them, and his tormentor became correspondingly enraged. Again he struck his defenceless antagonist across the mouth. But at this moment a short, broad-shouldered little man stepped out from among the onlookers and sauntered over to the cowardly ruffian. One of his hands was thrust into his pants' pocket and in the other he carried a huge revolver which looked almost as long as himself. This terrifying weapon he raised and brushed its muzzle deliberately back and forth across the tip of the other man's nose, which was nearly a foot above the top of his own head.

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Bill Cotton protects Al from the guerilla

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"Now, look here, Daddy Longlegs," said he, in a persuasive tone, "you let this kid alone or I 'll blow you into the river. These boys are game; an', by jinks, I 'm goin' to see that they 're treated decent from now on. Everybody take notice."

He swept a calm, authoritative glance around over the crowd, spat upon the ground, stuck his revolver back into its holster and, with both hands now in his pockets, strolled back to the tree whence he had come, and sat down.

Yeager laughed nervously, seeming to fear the effect of this exhibition of authority on the part of some one beside himself.

"I was just goin' to say that," he remarked.

The little man looked at him and his lip curled slightly.

"Yes, you were!" said he, derisively, and Yeager made no further comment, while Al's persecutor sneaked away sheepishly, muttering to himself.

There was a moment of embarrassed silence, and while it lasted there emerged from the woods behind the motley company a figure which hurried

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toward the guerilla captain officiously. As soon as they saw it, the boys smiled in unison.

"Here 's Jim!" exclaimed Wallace. "Now we 'll catch it!"

The deck hand glanced toward them, then, with a look of relief, said to Yeager,

"Well, you got 'em, I see, Captain."

"Yes, yes, I got 'em," replied Yeager, starting from thought and eying Jim uneasily. "Much obliged to you fer puttin' me on."

"Oh, sure; that 's all right," exclaimed Jim, beaming on him. "I hate a Yank worse 'n pizen."

He turned and, walking over, faced Al and Wallace.

"Nice day, ain't it?" he inquired, with a sneer. "How do you kids like it? You ain't doin' no fancy boxin' to-day, Al Briscoe, are yeh?"

"Well, well; my dear old friend, James!" exclaimed Al, in affected surprise. "Are n't you the proud boy, though, over this great victory?"

"None o' yer freshness, now," cried Jim, doubling up his fists, threateningly, "er I 'll mash yeh one."

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"Here, here!" cried Yeager, loudly. "Don't abuse the prisoners!"

Jim looked at him in surprise.

"Why not?" he asked, as if abusing prisoners were the most natural pastime in the world.

"Because I said so," returned Yeager, bluntly. "That 's why."

The deck hand appeared to meditate this unusual ruling for a moment. Then he inquired,

"When yeh goin' to shoot these Yanks, Captain?"

"Well," said the guerilla chief, hesitatingly, and stopped. Then he shot a furtive glance at the short, broad-shouldered man. The latter was sitting in a lounging attitude with his arms clasped around his knees, but his eyes were fixed steadily on Yeager.

"Well," began the Captain, again. "I ain't a-goin' to shoot 'em. I 'm a-goin' to take 'em down an' turn 'em over to General Price."

He looked again at the short man, who was now gazing calmly out over the river. The boys breathed sighs of relief and thanksgiving, for it seemed they were to be saved for the moment, at least, from

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their most imminent peril of being murdered in the woods.

"What?" cried Jim, angrily. "Yeh told me yeh 'd shoot 'em if I got 'em fer yeh."

"I find they ain't deservin' uh death," returned Yeager, with dignity. "Leastways, not unless ordered by a reg'lar military court."

"Oh, thunder!" exclaimed Jim. He frowned in disappointed hatred at Al, then turned and walked away.

"Well, I must be goin'," said he. "I got business up to Lexington."

"Hold on!" cried Yeager. "What 's yer hurry? We 're just startin' fer Arrer Rock to take these prisoners to General Price. I want you fer a witness ag'in 'em."

"Aw, no, I can't do no good," returned Jim, hastily, continuing to back away. "I 've told yeh all I know about 'em. I got to go."

Then he felt a nudge on his arm and looked at the short man, who had risen and, with his hand on his big holster, was gazing up into Jim's face.

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"Pshaw, you 'd better come with us," said he, in a soft voice.

Jim's eyes wavered, then shot a desperate, hunted look around over the crowd. But by a great effort he controlled himself.

"Oh, very well. Yes," he replied, with as much carelessness as he could assume. "I 'll go."

The horses of the guerilla gang were tied a few yards back in the timber. The boys were led to them and mounted, each one riding between two guards; and then the party, forming in a rough column of fours, started out. They soon emerged from the woods, passed up through a ravine and so out upon the bluffs, where presently they turned into a faintly marked country road running to the southeast, toward Arrow Rock. For hours they travelled, alternately at a trot and a walk, through the pretty, rolling country of Saline County, now passing among stretches of forest, gay with the foliage of Autumn, and again moving across reaches of open land, dotted here and there with little farms, most of them deserted and falling to decay. But always

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they avoided the main roads and often they travelled across the fields, through ravines and along the lower edge of ridges, making it evident that these men possessed a knowledge of the country as intimate as that of the Sioux in the Northwest.

The boys were held near the centre of the column, and several files ahead of them was Jim, who rode along easily, slouching in the saddle and yielding to the motions of his horse as if accustomed to it through long practice. It was noticeable to the boys that the short man held a place in column immediately behind Jim; for this guerilla company appeared to have no regular formation, and the men fell in wherever they chose, sometimes even changing their places on the march.

Toward evening the gang approached Arrow Rock and were halted by a picket in the edge of the little town. The officer of the guard, a young man in the full uniform of a Confederate lieutenant, came out to meet Yeager, who had ridden to the front.

"Is General Price's army here?" asked Yeager.

"Yes," answered the Lieutenant. "Who are you?"

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"Captain Yeager and command, with Yankee prisoners."

"Captain Yeager? Of whose regiment?"

"Nobody's," replied the chief, boastfully. "We go it alone."

"Oh, I see," said the other, a slight inflection of contempt in his voice. "Er — ah — partisan rangers?"

"What?"

"Bushwhackers? — Guerillas?"

"That 's what," replied Yeager. "I want to see General Price."

"General Price is not here," stated the Lieutenant. "This is General Clark's brigade of Marmaduke's division. You can see General Clark if you wish."

"All right," said Yeager. "Show us in."

The officer of the guard instructed one of his men to conduct the guerilla band to the house occupied by General Clark as headquarters, near the centre of the town. The streets were swarming with Confederate soldiers, and long lines of cavalry horses were hitched along the sidewalks or tied to their picket

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lines in the middle of the streets. Some of the soldiers were little better clothed than the guerillas, in civilian garments of various hues and cuts, while others wore threadbare suits of butternut jeans, and others still, many of them, were attired in new uniforms of Federal blue, doubtless recently captured.

As they approached General Clark's headquarters, Jim suddenly left his place and, spurring up beside Yeager, exclaimed, earnestly,

"Say, Cap, honest, I 've got to be goin'. It 's almighty important fer me to get to Lexington."

"It 's almighty important fer you to stay with me till you 've saw General Clark," replied Yeager, gruffly. "Now, don't be foolish or you 'll git hurt."

Jim was pale to the lips but, looking around, he saw the short man following close after him and he continued riding beside Yeager. Arrived at headquarters, the column halted, and the Captain dismounted and entered. In a few moments a Confederate corporal with two men came out and, walking over to Al and Wallace, ordered them to dismount. Then the corporal noticed that their hands were tied behind them. He jerked out a jack

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knife and cut the cords on their wrists, which were swollen and bleeding.

"How long have you been tied that way?" he demanded.

"Since before noon, when we were captured," replied Wallace.

The corporal glanced at the guerillas about him.

"That 's a fine way to treat helpless prisoners," he exclaimed, angrily. "It 'ud take a gang like you-all, who dassent fight in the open, to torture a kitten, — if yeh ever had nerve enough to catch one."

Some of the guerillas looked ugly, but they dared do no more in the midst of a Confederate camp, and in great indignation the corporal marched his squad and prisoners through the doorway and into the presence of General Clark, who was seated at a table, with Yeager standing before him.

"These are the prisoners, General," said Yeager, importantly.

"Yes, I see," replied General Clark, dryly, as he measured the evident youth of the captives. Then he continued, addressing Wallace,

"Where have you boys come from?"

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"From Dakota, where we have been fighting Indians," returned Wallace.

The General looked disappointed.

"Oh, is that it?" he asked. "You don't know much about matters around here, then?"

"No, sir," Wallace answered. "We don't know anything about them. We were coming down the Missouri on a barge, straight from Dakota, when we were taken."

"Well, Captain," remarked the General, leaning back in his chair and glancing at Yeager. "I don't see that your prisoners are of much value."

"Mebbe not," replied Yeager, somewhat crestfallen. "But you 'd better see the feller that told me about 'em. Mebbe he knows somethin' more."

General Clark sent out the corporal and in a moment the latter returned, leading Jim forcibly by the arm. The short, broad-shouldered guerilla followed them. The deck hand was trembling visibly and his eyes were wild but he was evidently striving to maintain his composure.

"What do you know about these prisoners?" demanded General Clark.

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"I don't know nothin', General," answered Jim, his voice shaking. "Only they 're Yanks, an' I thought they ought to be turned over. I did n't expect,—" he stopped short.

"Did n't expect what?"

"I — I did n't expect they 'd be examined none, ner that I 'd be dragged into it. I thought they 'd — they 'd be shot."

"In the regular Confederate service we do not shoot prisoners of war," replied the General, turning a coldly significant glance upon Yeager. "And why," he continued, addressing Jim, "did n't you want to be dragged into it, as you say?"

The deck hand's eyes wavered and he made no reply.

"What are you so alarmed about?" persisted the General, leaning forward and watching him suspiciously.

Al cleared his throat.

"Pardon me, General Clark," said he, "but I believe you will find on inquiry that this man is a deserter from your service."

Jim started as if he had been shot.

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"It ain't so!" he cried, wildly. "I ain't never been in the Confederate army." He made an involuntary step toward the door, but his guard pulled him back firmly.

"Why do you think that?" asked General Clark of Al.

"He was a deck hand on the boat I ascended the Missouri on," replied Al, "and I had trouble with him. That 's doubtless why he hoped to have me shot. I judge that he was in the Confederate service only by threats and boasts that he made to me, and he was probably in an Arkansas regiment."

"An Arkansas regiment?" the General asked. "We have a whole division of Arkansas troops with us,— Fagan's."

A curious, gurgling gasp came from Jim's throat. His face was chalky.

"I never heerd o' Fagan," he sputtered. "Ner I ain't been in Arkansaw in all my life."

"You are not convicted," General Clark said, calmly. "But the matter is worth investigating."

He called the sergeant of the headquarters guard and directed him to have Jim placed in close custody,

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and the deck hand was led away, reeling and apparently almost fainting. Al never saw him again; and though by chance he heard long afterward that Jim had, in fact, been in an Arkansas regiment, he could never ascertain whether the young fellow paid the penalty of death for his violation of his oath of enlistment.

When Jim had been led away, the General turned to Al and asked,

"You wear no uniform. Why not?"

"I am not enlisted in the army, sir. I am too young."

"Ah! You would not be in our service," the General returned, with a smile. "But you are a Union sympathizer?"

"Yes, sir, I am," replied Al, firmly.

"Well, you appear to be a pretty bright boy," the General observed, shrewdly. "I think it will be as well not to have you at large for a few days. Corporal, lock these young men in that brick storehouse a block below here, on the left side of the street. Mount a guard, give them supper, and keep them securely till further orders."

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As they were being marched out, they passed the short guerilla who had championed them in the morning. He was lounging by the doorstep. Al motioned to him and he caught step with them.

"We are very grateful to you for taking our part down there where we were captured," said he. "We 'd have been killed if it had n't been for you."

"Maybe," said the other, somewhat embarrassed. "But I did n't like the way you were taken."

"How do you mean?"

"Oh, havin' that dough-faced shipmate o' yours come in to give yeh up,— pervidin' we 'd shoot yeh!"

"It was a low-down trick," said Wallace.

"I should say it was! I 'm glad you tipped off the General to the kind of a pup he is."

"Why are you so set against him?" asked Al.

"Aw, I just don't like his looks," returned the bushwhacker. "Yeh kin see he 's yellow, an' I sized him up fer a deserter when he got in such a sweat to pull out."

"What 's your name?" asked Al, as the man stopped, evidently not intending to go as far as their prison with them.

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The bushwhacker looked at him suspiciously.

"You need n't be afraid of me," Al insisted. "Perhaps we can do you a good turn sometime."

For a moment longer the other hesitated, then answered,

"My name 's Bill Cotton," and, turning, he walked away.

The boys were soon securely locked in their prison with a sentry before the door. It was a small brick building near the river bank, and all its windows were boarded up with heavy planks except a small square one facing the river, the sill of which was about six feet above the floor. They had been confined but a few moments when the corporal returned, bringing a quantity of hardtack, a chunk of bacon, a pail of drinking water, two blankets and a small box of ointment.

"There," said he, as he handed the various articles to the boys, "fill yerselves up an' rub some o' this yere grease stuff on yer wrists. It ain't the best; lard an' marigold juice is the best, but I ain't got none, so I jest bought this in a store. I reckon it 'll help some."

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The boys thanked him warmly.

"That 's all right," he replied. "I hate to see prisoners abused. I found out how it felt myself, once. This is a kind of a nasty hole to put you in but you 'll likely be let out o' here an' paroled in the mornin', when we start fer Glasgow."

"Are you going to Glasgow?" asked Al, suddenly interested.

"You bet we are," confided the corporal, sociably, "an' some o' Joe Shelby's boys with us; got orders this evenin'. There 's quite a bunch o' your Yank friends up there, an' a big grist o' muskets, too, an' we want the whole lot." He smiled genially at the boys in anticipation.

Al became alert and, therefore, cautious.

"I 've understood Glasgow is a pretty strong position," said he, carelessly. "You 'll have to have a large force to take it."

The Corporal laughed. "Oh, we 've got plenty," he rattled on. "There 's our whole brigade,— Clark's,— an' five hundred men from Jackman's brigade, of Shelby; an' then old General Joe himself is goin' up this side the river, so I 've heard, to

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bang the town in front with artillery while we bust in the back door."

"Well, I 'll bet there are enough of our fellows there to hold it, anyhow," declared Al, stoutly.

"No, there ain't; there ain't above a thousand Yanks there," answered the corporal, with conviction. "An' we 'll have four thousand. Besides that, they don't know we 're comin', an' we 'll gobble 'em before they wake up."

"That does seem like pretty big odds," admitted Al. "Still, I think they 'll hold you."

"No, they won't," repeated the corporal, as he stepped through the doorway, key in hand. "Well, I got to be goin'. Bye-bye, Yanks. Sleep tight."

The key turned in the lock and he was gone, leaving the boys to themselves.

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CHAPTER XVIII

THE DEFENCE OF GLASGOW

AS soon as their kindly but indiscreet jailer was out of hearing, Al exclaimed in a whisper, that the sentry might not overhear,

"Wallace, we must get out of here somehow and up to Glasgow to warn our garrison. It may not do any good; I 'm afraid the Johnnies will be too many, but our boys must n't be surprised if we can help it."

"No, indeed," agreed Wallace, fervently. "But how are we to get away?"

"We 'll see," returned Al. "Hold me up while I look at this window. Be mighty quiet, so the sentry won't hear us."

Wallace bent his back, and Al stepped on it and felt the iron bars of the high window overlooking the river. Every one was firm and solid.

"We can't get through there," he whispered,

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after descending to the floor again. "It would take two weeks' work to loosen one of those bars."

Total darkness had fallen by this time, for in the middle of October night comes much earlier than in the months of July and August, during which the boys had been campaigning in Dakota and Montana. They started around the room in opposite directions, feeling of the boarded windows. When they came together again, Wallace said,

"There 's one over here may do. The planks are spiked fast to the window sill, but the sill seems to be rotten or loose."

He crept again to the window referred to, followed by Al. They found that by working the planks back and forth they could move the portion of the casing to which they were fastened. In a few moments they had an opening large enough at the bottom for them to crawl through.

"This is mighty lucky, but let 's wait a while," cautioned Wallace. "There are too many people moving around, and the sentry is wide awake yet."

They waited one hour, and then two. The sounds of voices and footsteps gradually died away out-

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side. For a long time their guard walked back and forth on the ground before the door, then they heard him fling himself down with a grunt.

"It 'll be an hour and a half at least before he 's relieved," whispered Al. "He 'll doze or sleep."

They waited fifteen or twenty minutes longer, then cautiously pulled out the bottom of the planks and propped them with a small piece of board they had found on the floor, so that they would not spring back. Then one at a time they crept through the narrow opening. Once outside, they tip-toed toward the river.

"I can't swim," whispered Wallace. "My arm hurts like fury since it was tied back this afternoon."

"Then if we can't find a boat along here somewhere, you 'll have to stay or run off in the woods," replied Al. "It will be a long pull for me, but I 'll try to swim the river before I 'll give up getting to Glasgow."

They made their way along the bank for some distance and presently, as luck would have it, came to a small row-boat pulled out on shore. They could

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find only one oar in it but they worked the boat down to the water, got in and shoved off. The rapid current carried them quickly away from the Arrow Rock bank and then, by vigorous paddling, Al succeeded finally in bringing the boat to the opposite shore a mile or so down stream. They stepped on land and pushed the boat out again to drift on down river.

"Now I know the country from here to Glasgow like a book," said Al. "I 've been over it often with father. There 's a road up here somewhere on the bluffs, and when we strike that we can keep on going, right into Glasgow. We 'll have to hurry, though, for Clark's men will surely be crossing pretty soon now, and we must get ahead of them."

It was now about eleven o'clock of the night of October 14, and the boys were on Arrow Rock Point, fourteen or fifteen miles from Glasgow. But at four the next morning, footsore and weary, they came to the picket post at the bridge on the Boonville road across Gregg's Creek, near the southern edge of town, and fifteen minutes later they were conducted into the presence of Colonel Chester

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Harding, Jr., who, with a detachment of his regiment, the Forty-third Missouri Volunteer Infantry, and a few militia and citizen guards, was holding the place.

"Where have you come from?" inquired Colonel Harding, as soon as they had introduced themselves.

"From Arrow Rock, sir," answered Al, somewhat breathless in his eagerness. "We were taken from a boat on the Missouri River early yesterday by guerillas and conveyed to Arrow Rock, where we were imprisoned; but we escaped last evening and have come here to tell you that Arrow Rock is occupied by Clark's brigade and part of Shelby's division, of Price's army, who intend to attack Glasgow to-day."

Colonel Harding's face expressed surprise and concern.

"Are you sure of what you say?" he asked. "Are the rebels at Arrow Rock part of Price's main army?"

"Yes, sir, they are," Al assured him, positively. "We were examined by General Clark himself, and

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we later learned from one of his men that they will attack Glasgow to-day. They are going to use artillery from the west bank of the river and troops on this side, with artillery, too, I suppose. They claim they will bring about four thousand men."

Colonel Harding arose and walked the floor. "If they do," said he, "I fear they will defeat us. I have expected to be attacked by bushwhackers, perhaps in large numbers, but not by Price's main column. However, we will give them the best fight possible; and I thank you heartily for the information you have brought me. My troops are already bivouacked in battle positions, but I will warn them to be ready for immediate action."

He put on his hat and started to the door, then turned back to Al. "I see you are in civilian clothes," he remarked. "Do you want to fight if there is an engagement?"

"Indeed I do, sir," replied Al, earnestly.

"Are you enlisted?"

"No, sir. I am not old enough."

"That is unfortunate," observed the Colonel. "You know, according to the rules of civilized war-

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fare, a man not regularly enlisted in the service of a belligerent is liable to be punished by death if he fights in battle and is captured. In case we should get the worst of this encounter, you see you may be in a bad way unless you are in the service."

"I shall fight, Colonel, and take my chances," replied Al, firmly. "I can't stand by and see the Union flag fired upon without shooting back."

"That is the right spirit, my boy," said Colonel Harding. "But be careful, and if you see things going against us, you had better try to get yourself away quietly."

"I lived in Glasgow until two years ago, sir," Al answered. "I think I shall be able to manage in case of disaster. Can we get guns? Private Smith, here, is on sick furlough, and my revolver I hid in the boat when we were brought to shore by the guerillas."

"Go to the court house and ask the ordnance officer," said the Colonel. "There are thousands of stands of arms there. Good luck to you."

He turned and went out and the boys followed immediately, turning however, toward the court house.

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They were provided, Al with a musket and Wallace with a revolver, as he could use only his right hand. The silence of early morning was brooding over the town as they emerged from the court house, for the watchful troops around could do nothing but wait for the enemy's blow to fall. But as they paused on the sidewalk, the deep boom of a cannon resounded across the river, echoing back from the bluffs, and a second later a shell crashed into the side of a building about half a block away. They could hear the window glass spatter on the ground in a jingling shower.

"There goes Joe Shelby's opening gun, if that reb corporal was right," exclaimed Al. "Come on!"

Wallace followed him and they ran south toward the bridge on the Boonville road across Gregg's Creek, by which they had come in an hour or so before. At a street corner they encountered three companies of infantry going on the double-quick to the same point, with canteens rattling against their bayonet scabbards. The boys fell in behind the first company and kept on, until the column deployed

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into line along the creek bank and the men threw themselves on the ground behind bushes or whatever other cover offered. The bridge had been stripped of its plank flooring by the picket guard, and only the bare stringers now remained, offering no footing for an attacking column.

"My, but that 's hard work, runnin' that way," panted a stout man beside Al. "Wonder what the rebs are doin'?" He raised himself on his elbows and peered ahead.

On the crest of the hill across the narrow valley two field guns frowned on the bridge, the cannoneers standing motionless at their posts, seeming to wait only the command to open fire. In front of them, long lines of dismounted cavalry were reaching out, like slowly unfolding ribbons, against the brown face of the hill. Al and Wallace watched them curiously. Would they never cease to extend? All at once an officer on a black horse darted up to the two field guns as if shot out of the woods behind. They could see him point his arm toward the bridge, gesturing emphatically. Then the cannoneers sprang to life, two vivid streaks of fire

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spurted from the muzzles of the guns and Al felt, rather than heard, a terrific explosion which seemed to take place all around him at once. Following it came a sensation of intense, numbing silence that was at length pierced by the thin, liquid vibration of a bugle, blowing somewhere far off, "the charge." Then gradually other sounds came to his reviving ear-drums, and he realized that a shell had burst directly over his head, though he was unhurt. He glanced at Wallace, whose eyes looked dazed.

"Was n't that awful?" whispered Al.

"Awful, yes. Awful," repeated Wallace. He seemed almost beyond words. But he suddenly hitched up on his knees, exclaiming,

"There, look! They 're coming!"

Al turned his eyes to the front. The long, ribbon-like line of Confederates was pitching forward down the hill and out across the floor of the valley toward them. Two flags, fluttering blotches of red and blue, tilted forward above it. Little ripples ran back and forth along the line, like the wind ripples in growing wheat, as the men strained to keep alignment; and ahead of them whirled a shrill,

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ear-piercing wave of sound more united, more defiant and more formidable than any Indian war-whoop the boys had ever heard. It came to their senses that they were listening for the first time to that heart-chilling "rebel yell" of which they had so often been told.

An officer walked rapidly along behind their own line, his voice, high-keyed with excitement, striving vainly to be reassuring.

"Now, boys, now, don't get scared," he kept repeating. "Hang it all, hold your fire, men! Hold your fire!"

All at once the volume of yells ceased. Al and Wallace looked to the front and saw that the whole line of the enemy had stopped, rigid as a fence. Even as they looked, a volley blazed along the line as if fired from one gun. The fat man beside Al dropped his musket and began to cry, frantically,

"Oh, oh, oh, my shoulder! Oh, oh, oh, my shoulder!"

There was no time to heed him. Through the wall of smoke before them, created by the volley, again broke the Confederates on the run, their

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dreadful yell preceding them, the two frayed battle flags eddying above the smoke like the masts of catboats in a seaway.

"Lord, Al, they don't fight like Indians!" gasped Wallace, hoarsely.

As a photograph on the brain there came to Al a flashing recollection of the broad plain fronting Tahkahokuty, bathed in the sunlight, with the Sioux swooping and circling before the steadily advancing troops.

"No," said he, briefly.

The officer came behind them again, running, and bellowing above the uproar,

"Company, rise! Fire by company! Ready! Aim! Fire!"

A volley as steady as that of the enemy flamed along the front of the company. Al was conscious of a vague surprise that in such chaos the men could maintain a discipline so machine-like. But the enemy's charging line did not appear even to waver.

"Load! Fire at will! Commence firing!" howled the officer, jumping into the air to look over the heads of his men at the enemy beyond the creek.

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"Fast, boys! Fer Gawd's sake, put it into 'em fast!"

The muskets began to rattle in a disjointed way, Al's among the rest, while Wallace's revolver popped viciously. Everything in front was veiled in thin white vapors, and the men in the charging line resembled shadows, dancing upon a curtain. But the Confederates, like a stampede of buffalo, held to their headlong course. Shortly the officer bawled, in a voice almost tearful,

"No use, boys! They 're flankin' us. They 're across the creek, up and down. Come back; back to the buildings!"

Most soldiers fear being flanked more than death itself in front. The men cast terrified glances toward the enemy, streaming past beyond their wings, and broke like sheep for the rear, where the outlying houses of the town looked down a gentle slope toward them. They were not panic-stricken, but, as in one man, the instinct awoke in them to cover their flanks and save themselves from the dreaded attack in rear. With the enemy hard behind them and filling the air with exultant yells, they swarmed

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into the buildings, like bees into their hives, smashing through doors and windows in their haste and from these new havens of refuge they resumed their interrupted fire desperately.

Al and Wallace, with five or six soldiers, made for a brick residence standing back in a shady garden. By main force they tore a pair of blinds from a shuttered window, crushed in the glass and sash with flailing musket butts, and leaped through, landing upon the plush carpet of a handsome parlor. The men swept up a polished mahogany table and three or four rosewood chairs and jammed them into the vacant window, then opened fire feverishly upon the enemy, who were already tearing down the fence pickets in front of the house or leaping over them. The Confederate line of battle had dissolved into groups during the impetuous pursuit and the men, so dauntless in their advance across the open fields, looked doubtfully at the yawning windows and doors of the houses, each spitting fire, upon which they had now come. They discharged a patter of harmless shots, then began to seek cover behind trees, fences, or stones.

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There was a sergeant among the men with Al and Wallace. He peered through the rosewood chair-legs cluttered in the window, and cried,

"They 're takin' cover, boys. We can hold 'em now. Here, Jones, Throckmorton, Schmidt,— get upstairs. Shoot down at 'em;— drive 'em back."

Al raised his voice. "This is the house of Doctor Falkner," he said. "I know him well; he is a Union man. Treat the house as well as you can, boys." To Wallace he added, "My father sold him all this furniture and these carpets."

The soldiers glanced at him curiously. This regard for property in the midst of battle was unusual. But the Sergeant answered, as he thrust his musket barrel through the chair legs,

"Sure, we 'll treat it as well as we can."

The Confederates beyond the front fence seemed all at once to have become tired. They declined to be coaxed or urged forward by their officers, but from behind their hiding-places they kept up a constant pop-popping of muskets and carbines which gradually reduced all the doors and windows on that side of the house to kindlings. Framed pictures on the

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opposite walls were punctured, and here and there light from the adjoining rooms shone through holes in the plastering. A soldier in the parlor was desperately wounded and lay in a stupor on a spot of the plush carpet which was sopping wet with blood, his head pillowed on a gay silk sofa cushion. Now and then other soldiers dodged into or out of the house through doorways on the side opposite to the enemy, and once the officer who had directed the fight at the creek came in, but finding the Sergeant in charge, left immediately. Time seemed to stand still. The little garrison, wrapped in the absorbing occupation of pumping lead at the almost invisible enemy in front, took no note of its passage.

Outside, a steady, rattling roar seemed to envelop the whole town and country around, pierced constantly by human voices, shouting, pleading or commanding, now near and again distant. Once Al, his throat parched with the choking fumes of confined powder smoke, darted back to the kitchen in search of water. While he was drinking he heard a slight creak and rustle, audible in the uproar by reason of its very lightness, and, looking around,

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he saw a woman standing on the top step of the cellar stairs, her hand on the door knob. He had to look twice before he knew her, for when he had last seen her, her hair, now iron gray, was brown, and her face, now wrinkled, was smooth and youthful.

"Why, Mrs. Falkner!" he stammered. "Why, are you here?"

She peered at him. "Al Briscoe!" she exclaimed, in a trembling voice. "What on earth — why, how you 've grown!"

She uttered the commonplace remark almost mechanically. She seemed hardly to know what she was doing.

"Mrs. Falkner, you are in great danger here," cried Al.

"No, no; I am down cellar. I am safe if the house does n't burn. Is it on fire?"

"No, but it is being riddled with bullets."

"That is not so bad as fire," she answered, putting her hand weakly to her head. "You will try to keep it from burning, won't you, Al?"

"I will do all I can, Mrs. Falkner," he answered,

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and before he could say more she pulled the cellar door shut and disappeared.

He ran back to the front of the house. The Sergeant was peeping excitedly past the edge of the parlor window. Directly he drew back, crying,

"They 're tryin' to get between us an' the next house!" He jabbed a commanding forefinger at Al and Wallace. "Here, you — you; jump upstairs. Shoot at 'em from the back windows. Stop 'em!"

The boys leaped up the broad, easy front stairway, three steps at a time, wrenched open a bedroom door at the top and ran to a window looking out over the back porch. Down along the side fence they could see a dozen or more Confederates running, crouching low. They were making for the porch. The boys fired simultaneously and they saw one man drop, then wriggle off through the grass. Wallace's revolver continued to bark while Al was reloading his musket, but the Confederates cast frightened glances up at their window, and before he was ready to fire again they had run back to the other side of the house once more. The boys

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looked over the back yard and the town behind it, and their eyes caught the roof of the court house, rising above the trees. A column of black smoke was pouring from it, with a dull glare of flames through and below it. Al caught Wallace by the arm.

"See! The court house is on fire!" he cried. "And all those thousands of arms are in it."

Wallace looked at the burning building, then apprehensively back at Al.

"I wonder if a shell did it, or if it 's Colonel Harding's orders?"

"There 's no telling," answered Al. "If it 's orders, it means that we 're whipped and the court house is being burned to keep the rebs from getting the arms. Listen! Is n't the fire slacking up?"

It was true. The deep boom of the Confederate artillery had died out from among the confused noises of the battle; and as the boys hearkened, the continuous rattle of musketry diminished until only scattered, individual shots could be heard. Then these ceased and a silence followed, almost painful to the ears after the uproar.

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"What can it mean?" asked Wallace, in an uneasy tone. Then he went on, hopefully, "Perhaps the Johnnies have given up the attack."

They walked to the stairway and, as they went down, saw that the Sergeant had opened the shattered front door and was standing on the porch outside, while a Confederate officer, with a bit of dirty white rag tied to the point of his sabre, was advancing up the walk toward him. Something seemed to warn Al to keep out of sight and he stepped into a corner where he could hear but could not be seen.

"What do you want?" demanded the Sergeant, gruffly, as the Confederate reached him. "Be quick, or we 'll open fire again."

"Your commander has surrendered the city and garrison, Sergeant," replied the Confederate, who wore the insignia of a major on his coat collar. "You are prisoners of war. You have made a very gallant defence. Permit me to congratulate you."

"Surrendered?" cried the Sergeant, in utter amazement. "Man alive, we have n't begun to

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fight! We 'll show you whether we 've surrendered. Get back to your lines, sir, before we fire!"

He stepped into the house to slam the door in the Major's face, but the latter raised his hand with a gesture of authority.

"Just a moment," he said, soothingly. "I tell you the truth. Colonel Harding has surrendered. We have broken through your lines on the north and east of the city. There was nothing else for him to do."

The Sergeant's face was purple with rage.

"Well, I 'll be —" he began, but he was interrupted by the entrance of his own Captain, who laid a restraining hand on his arm.

"Frank, it 's all over," exclaimed the Captain, in a broken voice. "We 've surrendered, Frank."

He dropped his hand with a despairing gesture, and two big tears rolled from his eyes and coursed down his cheeks into his long, black beard. Then he straightened up and flashed an indignant glance at the Confederate officer.

"At all events, sir," he exclaimed, "you did not break through my line."

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The Confederate bowed his head gravely.

"No, sir;" he replied, "we did not. You have fought nobly, splendidly, against superior numbers. The whole garrison has covered itself with honor."

The Captain seemed to be struck by his antagonist's politeness.

"Anyway," said he, "it is not so hard to surrender to a gentleman."

"Thank you, sir," the other answered. "Courage deserves at least the meed of praise. And now you will please be good enough to assemble your company from these various buildings and march them, under arms, to the vicinity of the court house. The building was fired by your men before we got in and it is now burning, but the formal surrender will occur as near to it as possible."

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CHAPTER XIX

REUNITED

AL waited to hear no more, but slipped through a convenient doorway and out into the kitchen. He was just going to the cellar door when he heard Wallace's voice behind him.

"I 'm going to stay with you, Al," he said. "Where shall we hide?"

Al turned like a flash and caught his friend by the shoulder.

"No, you don't, now, old fellow!" he exclaimed. "I 'm outlawed, and you 're not going to put yourself deliberately in the same fix; no, indeed! You 're going out and surrender with the rest of the garrison; and no doubt the whole lot of you will soon be paroled, for I don't believe the rebs will want to carry a crowd of prisoners very far."

"Well, I 'm going to stay with you, anyhow," persisted Wallace, doggedly.

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"Wallace, don't be a fool!" cried Al, impatiently. Then, seeing that he must exercise diplomacy to make his friend follow the safer course, he went on, "Don't you see that it would be harder for two of us to escape than one, especially when you are disabled? I know Mrs. Falkner. She will hide me until I can get away, but she could not so easily hide two of us. Just give me your revolver and ammunition; that 's all I want, and you take my musket and surrender it, so there 'll be no question about your being unarmed. Nobody but Colonel Harding knows I 'm here or who I am; and, if it comes up, you can tell him I 've cut out and escaped, probably up-river."

"Al, I hate to do it," said Wallace, hesitatingly.

"You need n't. It 's best for us both," insisted Al. "Now go; time is precious, and good luck to you."

They gripped each other's hands in a firm farewell and Al stepped to the cellar door and opened it. Then he turned and shook his finger at Wallace smilingly.

"Mind, now; if you 're paroled, I 'll see you in

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St. Louis inside of ten days, and we 'll have lemonade together, with ice in it, at the ice-cream parlor near Third and Olive Streets."

He closed the door behind him and felt his way down the cellar stairs, his heart by no means as light as he had tried to make Wallace believe.

"Mrs. Falkner! Mrs. Falkner!" he called, softly, on reaching the bottom.

There was no answer.

"Mrs. Falkner!" Al repeated. "It 's Al Briscoe. I 'm in trouble."

He heard the rustle of her dress as she came toward him, saying,

"Al Briscoe? In trouble?"

"Yes," he answered. "The city has just surrendered. I have been fighting, though I am not an enlisted soldier, and if the Confederates catch me I shall very likely be shot. Will you hide me for a little while until I can escape from the city?"

"Why, of course I will, Al," exclaimed the kind-hearted lady, forgetting her own distress of mind in concern for him. "I am only too glad to help you. What time of day is it?"

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"It is about noon, Mrs. Falkner."

"Then you will hardly dare to venture out before dark," she said. "Till then you can stay in the cellar. If you feel your way, you will find a pile of boxes in the corner back here which you can hide behind, if you wish. But I am living alone in the house, except for old Dinah, and she ran away up town when the battle began. I think no one will suspect that you are hiding here. Are you hungry?"

"I have not eaten since last evening, in Arrow Rock," Al admitted.

"I will see if there is anything to eat upstairs," said Mrs. Falkner. "I suppose the house is completely wrecked?"

"Not altogether," Al replied, "but it is in pretty bad shape."

The lady went upstairs and presently returned with some food and a candle.

"Oh, everything is torn to pieces!" she groaned, as she handed these things to Al. "I don't know how I shall ever repair it, all alone, as I am." Then she continued, "You can see to eat by this

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candle and then you had better put it out, in case any one should look down the cellar stairs. Then, if you want to sleep, I will keep watch; and after dark I will waken you, and you can go to an old cave I know of, in a clump of bushes not far back of the house."

"Yes, I know the cave," said Al. "It 's the very place. Your son Frank and 'Chucky' Collins and I made that cave. We used to have a pirates' den there."

He smiled up at her as he bit into a pink slice of cold ham, the first he had tasted in months.

"Oh, did you, Al?" asked Mrs. Falkner in a low voice. She was silent a moment, then went on, slowly, "The Collins boy is in the rebel army. Frank — Frank — was killed at Prairie Grove." Her voice broke.

The smile vanished from Al's face.

"Oh, Mrs. Falkner!" he exclaimed. "How sorry I am. Poor old Frank! And your husband — Doctor Falkner?"

"Is a surgeon in Sherman's army," she said. "So long as he is left to me I should be thankful,

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for I am only one of thousands who have lost sons or husbands in our Nation's cause. What of your own parents, Al?"

Then he told her of his father's death and Tommy's capture and of his mother and Annie in St. Louis. For some time they talked, then Mrs. Falkner returned upstairs, while Al lay down behind the pile of boxes and was at once wrapped in the profound slumber of exhaustion.

No one disturbed the lonely house during the remaining hours of the day nor the early ones of the following night, for most of the Confederate army was farther uptown or in bivouac outside its limits. Sometime toward morning Mrs. Falkner awakened Al and conducted him cautiously to the cave, leaving him there with an ample supply of food for several days. The next day and night passed and Al still lay in his cramped refuge, undisturbed, but very stiff and uncomfortable and eager to get out and away.

During the second day Mrs. Falkner came to the cave and dropped a note down to him through a crack in the roof. In it she informed him that

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Colonel Harding and his command had been paroled the day before and marched away toward Jefferson City accompanied by an escort, to be delivered within the Union lines, wherever these might be met with. The last of the Confederate troops, she wrote, had just left, crossing the Missouri on steamboats and marching away westward, to join General Price's main army. The town was still quiet, but every one feared that gangs of guerillas would soon swoop down upon it; and she advised Al to make his escape as soon as darkness came.

Taking his revolver and such of his remaining food as he could conveniently carry, he accordingly crept out of his hiding-place soon after nightfall and made his way to the southeastward, following the country roads and keeping his direction by the stars. About six o'clock the next morning he arrived on the river bank opposite Boonville. Making inquiries of a negro, he found that the town was in possession of Union troops, and he soon crossed the river on the ferry. To his surprise and delight, the paroled garrison of Glasgow was just coming into town when he arrived, Wallace among them.

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They were loud in their praises of the kind treatment they had received at the hands of their captors, and especially of the escort under Lieutenant Graves, which had brought them down to the near vicinity of Boonville; for the Confederate soldiers had shared their rations with the prisoners and made their march as comfortable as possible in every way.

At Boonville the paroled men separated to await exchange; and Al and Wallace continued their journey together, going down to Jefferson City in an army wagon and thence by the Pacific Railroad to St. Louis, where they arrived safe during the second morning after leaving Boonville.

"Wallace," said Al, when they stepped from the train at the station and walked out into the street, where drays and omnibuses were rattling over the cobble stones and busy throngs of people covered the sidewalks, "the first thing we do must be to find an ice-cream parlor. We won't go to Third and Olive; that 's too far from here. But I want to drink that lemonade with you. I allowed ten days, you remember, but now it is only,— let me see,

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— five days. Then you will go out to Palm Street with me and see how a surprise affects my mother and Annie and —" he hesitated, then added, hopefully, "Tommy."

The refreshing drink was pleasant but they fairly gulped it down, for Al, now that at last he had reached his journey's end, was feverishly eager to see his dear ones once more. So they hastened to Fifth Street and boarded a north-bound horse car, which soon carried them to Palm Street, though to Al in his impatience the journey seemed hours long. As they came in sight of the house, Al saw his mother in the front yard, transplanting some flowers from a bed to pots. Her back was toward the street and the boys approached within a few feet without her hearing them. Then Al took off his hat and stepped up behind her.

"Excuse me, madam," said he, gravely, "but is this where Mrs. Thomas Briscoe lives?"

His mother turned and gave one startled glance at the brown-faced youth before her, in his rough, travel-stained clothes, then dropped her case-knife

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and flower pot on the ground, crying, in a voice thrilling with joy,

"Al, Al! My dear, dear boy!"

The next instant she was in his arms and both of them were laughing and crying at once. As soon as the first warm greeting was over, Al asked fearfully,

"Mother, have you seen or heard anything of Tommy?"

He need not have asked the question, for at this juncture a straight, boyish figure bounded through the front doorway, cleared the steps in one jump and sprang into Al's arms.

"What, Tommy?" cried Al, in amazed delight. "Can it possibly be you, so big and strong? I would not have known you. How and when did you get here?"

"They sent me down on another boat after the *North Wind* burned," Tommy answered.

"But how did you know to stop in St. Louis?" asked Al.

"Why, I hunted up Uncle Will, of course, to have

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him help me get to Minnesota, and then I was so glad to find that mama and Annie were here," Tommy replied. "What a hunt you have had for me, dear old brother!"

"Yes, but now we are together again, so everything has come out for the best, even though I did n't find you myself. Mother, where is Annie?"

"She is in school," answered Mrs. Briscoe. "But she will be home at three o'clock. Tommy should be there, too, but he will not start until next Monday. He is far back in studies for his age."

"But he must have learned many things in the last two years which he never could have learned in school," said Wallace, who had been warmly and affectionately greeted by Mrs. Briscoe.

"Yes, I did," admitted Tommy. "It was a great life up there among the Indians, and Te-o-kun-ko was always very good to me, and so were his squaw and the children. I think a lot of them all."

"We were a little afraid you might grow to think so much of them and of their life that you would not want to come back to us," said Al.

Tommy glanced at him reproachfully.

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"Why, Al," he exclaimed, "how could you think I would ever care as much for any one as for mama and you and Annie and —" a shadow crossed his face, "papa," he added.

Al, judging that his young brother did not yet realize any connection of Te-o-kun-ko with Mr. Briscoe's death, and deciding not to explain it until some later time, answered,

"We could n't be sure, Tommy, for you know such things have happened."

"I was always sure," remarked Mrs. Briscoe, calmly, and, indeed, there was no question that her mother's instinct had been correct, as it almost always is.

"Well," said Wallace, "with all the knowledge of the Indians and their ways you have gained, you ought to make a capital scout."

Tommy looked at him thoughtfully. "Perhaps I will — some day," he replied. "But first I want to learn the things that other fellows know, because I don't believe that without them, it is much use just to be able to ride and shoot and track game and so on."

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"Now, Al," Mrs. Briscoe interrupted, turning toward the door, "we all, your aunt and uncle, too, will be eager to know what has happened to you in the last six months, especially since you started west from Fort Rice. The last letter I had from you was the one you sent from there, on the eighteenth of July."

"There has been no chance to send you any since," replied Al. "And I got your last letter, dated June 20, at Fort Rice on my way down from the Yellowstone. So we shall all have much to tell each other. Although I did n't succeed in rescuing Tommy in the way I hoped to do," he put his arm affectionately over his small brother's shoulders, "I believe this trip of mine has been good for me, and will be in the future for all of us."

And so, indeed, it proved, for the following year Al readily secured an appointment to West Point through the hearty endorsements of General Sully and other army officers whom he had come to know in the Northwest; and the father of Wallace Smith, after the close of the war had brought prosperity and new floods of settlers to the Minnesota frontier,

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was able to help Mrs. Briscoe to such a profitable sale of her desirable claim near Fort Ridgely that she had enough to live upon comfortably at her sister's hospitable home in St. Louis, while Tommy and Annie were completing their education in the excellent schools of that city, and sometimes spending a vacation in cruising up and down the Mississippi on Captain Lamont's fine steamer. Thus Al's unselfish enterprise on behalf of his brother, begun under such discouraging circumstances, resulted, directly or indirectly, in advancing the interests and happiness of himself and all those dearest to him; and he never had cause for anything but gratitude and rejoicing over the friends made and the experiences gained during his adventurous Summer with Sully in the Sioux land.

THE END

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